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367CX: EVERGLADES' FIRST CROSSOVER

CERTIFIED BOAT TESTS

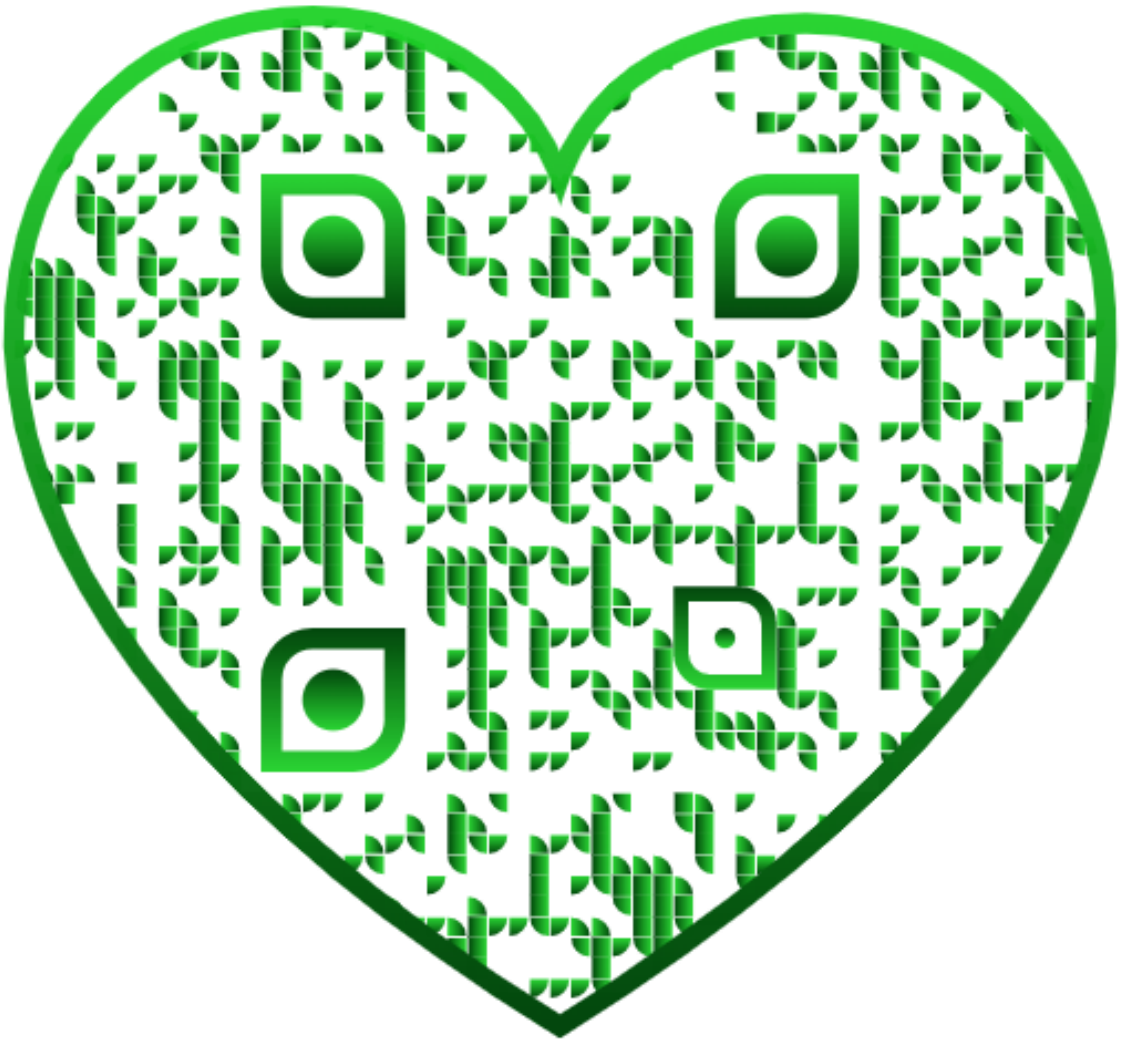
◀ **EVERGLADES 367CX**

BAY RIDER 269 BAY

PATHFINDER 2300 HPS

BENETEAU ANTARES 9

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025
VOLUME 98 NUMBER 8



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five things you should know about boat insurance

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1. **Boat insurance isn't just for accidents**
   With comprehensive coverage, you'll also be protected financially for theft, vandalism, and unexpected events like storms if you need repairs or replacements due to damage.

2. **Accidents can happen to anyone**
   When accidents happen, boat insurance offers liability coverage for damages or injuries you cause while boating, up to specified limits. It can also cover lawsuit costs if you're sued.

3. **Boat insurance can cover medical payments**
   Boat insurance offers a range of optional medical payments coverage limits, helping to cover medical expenses if you're in an accident or someone is hurt on your boat, regardless of fault.

4. **Most lenders require boat insurance**
   If you financed your boat, you'll likely need boat insurance since most lenders require boat insurance to protect their investment. Additionally, some marinas or municipalities require proof of insurance for docking.

5. **Progressive offers specialized boat coverages**
   Ever worry about getting stuck on the water? Progressive's Sign & Glide® On-Water Towing coverage** can help. It's an additional coverage that steps in if your boat is disabled or breaks down on the water, paying for on-water towing, jump starts, soft ungroundings, and fuel delivery. Fuel cost isn't included.

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This crossover dayboat is steeped in luxury.

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Hit the water with cruising versatility and comfort.

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A crossover bay boat that meets fishing and family needs.

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Looking to get skinny? This bay boat floats in 15 inches of water.

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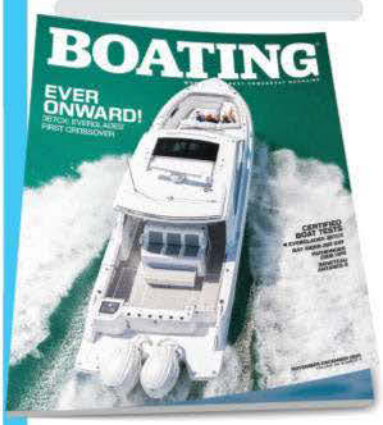

ON THE COVER

Everglades comes out swinging with its first-ever crossover dayboat, the 367CX. It offers versatility, style, top quality and innovation.
Photo: Courtesy Everglades Boats

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) OPTICALDESIGN / ADOBE STOCK, COURTESY HONDA MARINE, COURTESY FLIR, COURTESY OPTIMA BATTERTIES, PHIV2016 / ADOBE STOCK

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KEVIN FALVEY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / DIRECTOR, BOATING AND WATERSPORTS **kevin.falvey@firecrown.com**
PETE MCDONALD EXECUTIVE EDITOR
SUE WHITNEY MANAGING EDITOR
RYAN SWANSON ART DIRECTOR
JIM HENDRICKS ELECTRONICS AND WEST COAST EDITOR
JON WHITTLE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

EDITOR AT LARGE
RANDY VANCE FISHING AND MARINE GROUP

CONTRIBUTORS
Karl Anderson, Dan Armitage, Ron Ballanti, Tim Barker, Zenon Bilas, Tim Bower, Capt. Chris Caswell, Dean Travis Clarke, Garrett Cortese, Capt. Vincent Daniello, Marilyn DeMartini, Bill Doster, Phil Draper, Ken Englert, Michael Folkerts, Peter Frederiksen, Joe Friedman, Ben Greenwood, Steve Griffin, Michael "Mick" Hannock, Jim Hatch, Colin Hayes, Jeff Hemmel, Forest Johnson, Rich Johnson, Alan Jones, Tom King, Craig Kotilinek, John Linn, Charles Plueddeman, Capt. John N. Raguso, Lars-Åke Redéen, Lenny Rudow, Tom Schlichter, Rick Shackleton, Ed Sherman, Heather Steinberger, Zach Stovall, John Tiger Jr., Capt. John Page Williams

EDITORIAL OPERATIONS
SHAWN BEAN CREATIVE STUDIO
DAVE WEAVER CREATIVE DIRECTOR
MEGAN STANCHINA EDITORIAL OPERATIONS MANAGER
BRIAN DAUGHERTY DIGITAL PRODUCER
KELLY WEEKLEY PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
STEPHANIE FRY CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
PETE COFFIN PRODUCTION MANAGER / ARTIST

JOHN MCEVER PUBLISHER / BRAND MANAGER **john.mcever@firecrown.com**
RHONDA MOCK DIRECTOR, BRAND STRATEGY **rhonda.mock@firecrown.com**
BILL SIMKINS MARKETPLACE / ACCOUNT MANAGER **bill.simkins@firecrown.com**
NOREEN MURRAY MARKETPLACE / SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER **noreen.murray@firecrown.com**
VANESSA LUQUIS MARKETING MANAGER, BOATING AND WAKEBOARDING **vanessa.luquis@firecrown.com**

FIRECROWN
CRAIG FULLER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DAVID BRADFORD PRESIDENT
JONATHAN KELLER CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER
PRESTON BROWN EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, MEDIA SALES
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AMANDA JOYCE VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE/CONTROLLER
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NICOLE MCGUIRE GROUP PRESIDENT, HOBBY DIVISION
KELLY KELLER GROUP PRESIDENT, AVIATION DIVISION
DAVID CARR GROUP PRESIDENT, MARINE DIVISION
KAYLEE NIX EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
DARREN CAPUTO VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL
SUZIE MATOH HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

BOATING MAGAZINE 405 CHERRY STREET, CHATTANOOGA, TN 37402 / BOATINGMAG.COM

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FORMULA

Your Best Days Are Here...
in the All-New Formula 360 CBR!

With the All-New Formula 360 Crossover Bowrider, your best days are finally here! Now celebrating 70 years, an exciting new generation of Formula dayboats has arrived with the 360 CBR. From the stepped FAS^{3}TECH hull to the stylish hardtop with glass sunroof, this leap in day venture offerings is a refreshing, innovative choice for dayboaters. 36' in length with a generous 11' 3" beam, the 360 CBR heralds the arrival of the new generation of open-bow dayboats, the first driven by Formula Designer Michael Young, a John Adams-mentored new creative force in luxury-boating architecture. Young states, "The 360 CBR is a true blend of entertainment-ready comfort and the exhilarating agility that is rooted in our performance heritage." True to its Formula CBR lineage, the 360 boasts an open bow with a single-level, flush cockpit and a true stand-up cabin with overnight accommodations. Introduced with twin sterndrive – twin and triple outboard power in the fall – this perfectly balanced combination will take the experience farther than ever before!

The 360's Crossover SmartZone™ concept creates separate areas for a variety of activities while encouraging connections among guests, from the expansive bow to triple helm seating, a roomy portside lounge, outdoor kitchen, aft companion seat and wrap-around seating aft. The aft-facing sun lounge with multi-position backrests cleverly converts to an extended layout, perfect to oversee on-water activities at anchor. The available Extended Water Sport swim platform for sterndrive with motorized under-mount swim seat gives plenty of space to lounge, play and interact.

The cabin is perfect for overnight trips or taking a break from the sun with stand-up headroom, high-end private aircraft galley styling, double settee, permanent, full-size memory foam bed aft and a reimagined transverse head compartment for full, stand-up capability, expansive countertop and cleverly integrated storage.

The Formula 360 CBR is the next-generation Crossover Bowrider choice for the discerning boater desiring upscale dayboating with overnight accommodations!

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PINK CADILLAC!

There's a North Woods town in Michigan that's loaded with boating history.

I'm writing this in Cadillac, Michigan, on an early morning—the air redolent with the smell of pine. It will come as no surprise to at least some of you that this small town located in the North Woods of Michigan, and sharing its name with a car brand, is packed full with boating history. Today, Highfield Boats USA and Four Winns maintain facilities here, and use Lake Cadillac as a proving ground for new models.

The area has been a hotbed of boatbuilding for a long time. The local forests fed the lumber industry which provided the wood that was the raw material for recreational boats in the nascent period of the sport, as well as the source of labor. (The canal connecting the two lakes was dug by lumber baron, George Mitchell.) The list includes storied marine names such as Chris-Craft, Evinrude, Wagemaker and, of course, the Cadillac Boat Company.

DECK THE HULLS
Don't miss our Holiday Gift Guide on page 54.

Cadillac Boat Company actually built a model named the Cadillac Seville in 1957. For this venture, the firm partnered with Evinrude for power and licensed design vocabulary from the namesake automaker. Later, Wolverine Boats built fiberglass hulls and shipped them to Cadillac for finishing by what was by then known as the Cadillac Boat and Marine Company. These boats were offered under the Wagemaker marque. As fiberglass began taking over boatbuilding—about the same time rock 'n' roll began topping the charts—Cadillac Boat Company was sold.

I promise you that we will continue to do just that. Doing so is how we bring you the very best, most well-informed boating content on the planet.

Chris-Craft was building military vessels, including a version of the "Higgins Boat" LCVP landing craft, for the US war effort here in Cadillac. After the war, as recreational boatbuilding ramped up, Chris-Craft was reportedly building as many as 16 boats per day here. I've traveled to the area to test boats on Lake Cadillac for decades and have seen the building that was the old Chris-Craft plant, before it was destroyed by fire in 2013.

I'd be remiss not to note that Cadillac has a long history of boating recreation going back even further than the advent of recreational powerboating, to the late1800s. At that time, rusticators flocked to Lake Cadillac and Lake Mitchell and boarded one of several steamers that plied the lakes. These folks enjoyed picnics, the scenery, each other's company and perhaps caught some fish. Sounds familiar, right?

As we close this year, I reflect on not just the past year but years past. Recreational boating possesses a rich and interesting history, one in which Cadillac, like an ornament on a Christmas tree, is both special, yet one of many. From New York City, to Miami; from San Diego to Seattle; from Cannes, France to Vancouver and Brampton in Canada; and from Lake of the Ozarks to Cadillac, there are many locations in the pantheon of great boating places with such history and tradition. *Boating*'s editors have been there, boated them, know the history—and, in some instances, added to it. I promise you that we will continue to do just that. Doing so is how we bring you the very best, most well-informed boating content on the planet.

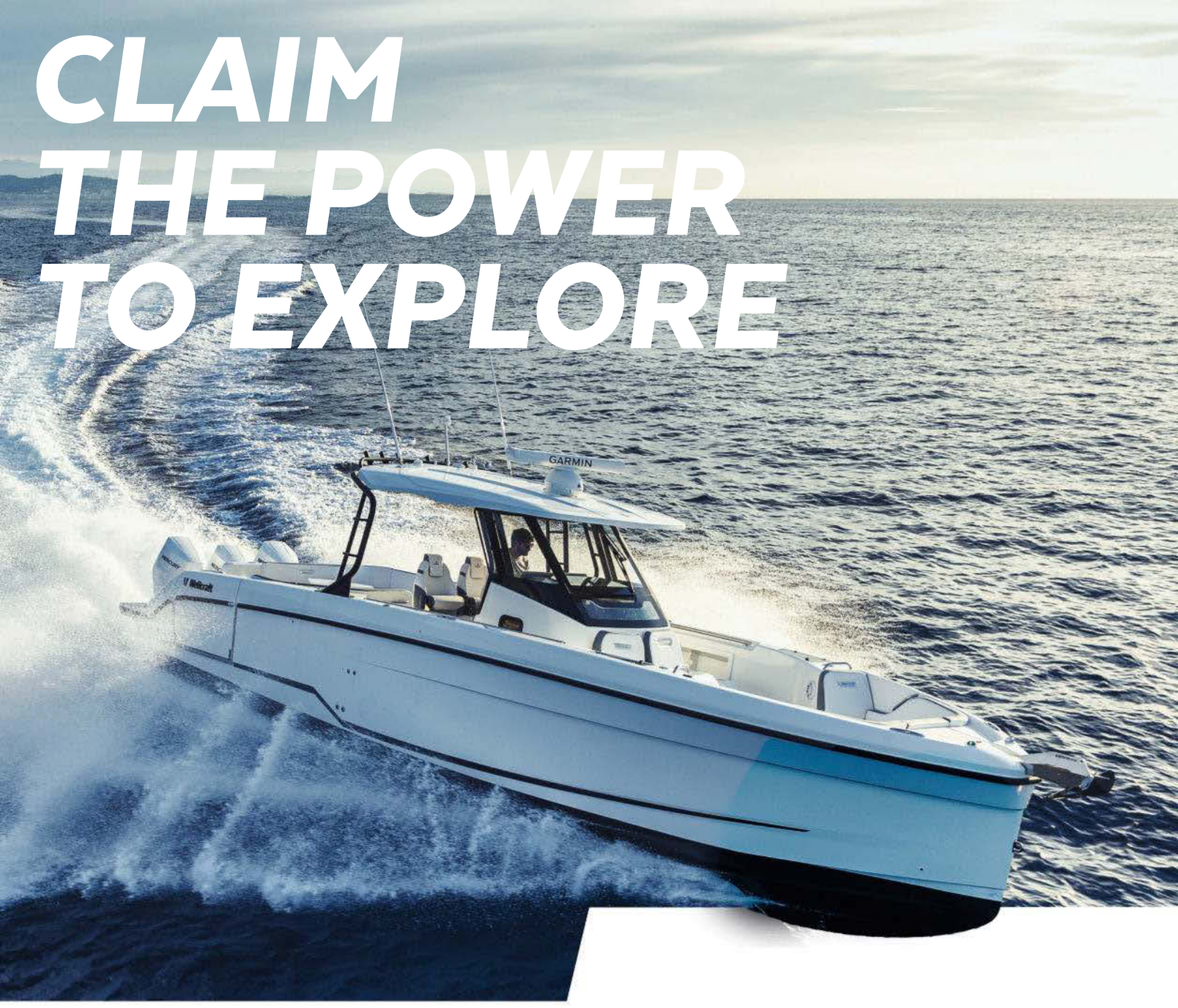
Wishing you a bright new year.

Enjoy the issue.

Kevin Falvey, Editor-in-Chief
editor@boatingmag.com

PHOTO: BILL DOSTER

CLAIM THE POWER TO EXPLORE



EUROPEAN POWER BOAT OF THE YEAR 2025

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More than a boat, a call to explore. Our new vessel combines exceptional power with optimized weight, ensuring unrivalled speed and agility up to 60mph! At 38'4'' (11.69m), the Wellcraft 38 T-Top offers the largest seating capacity in its class and a fold-down swimming platform for easy access to the water.
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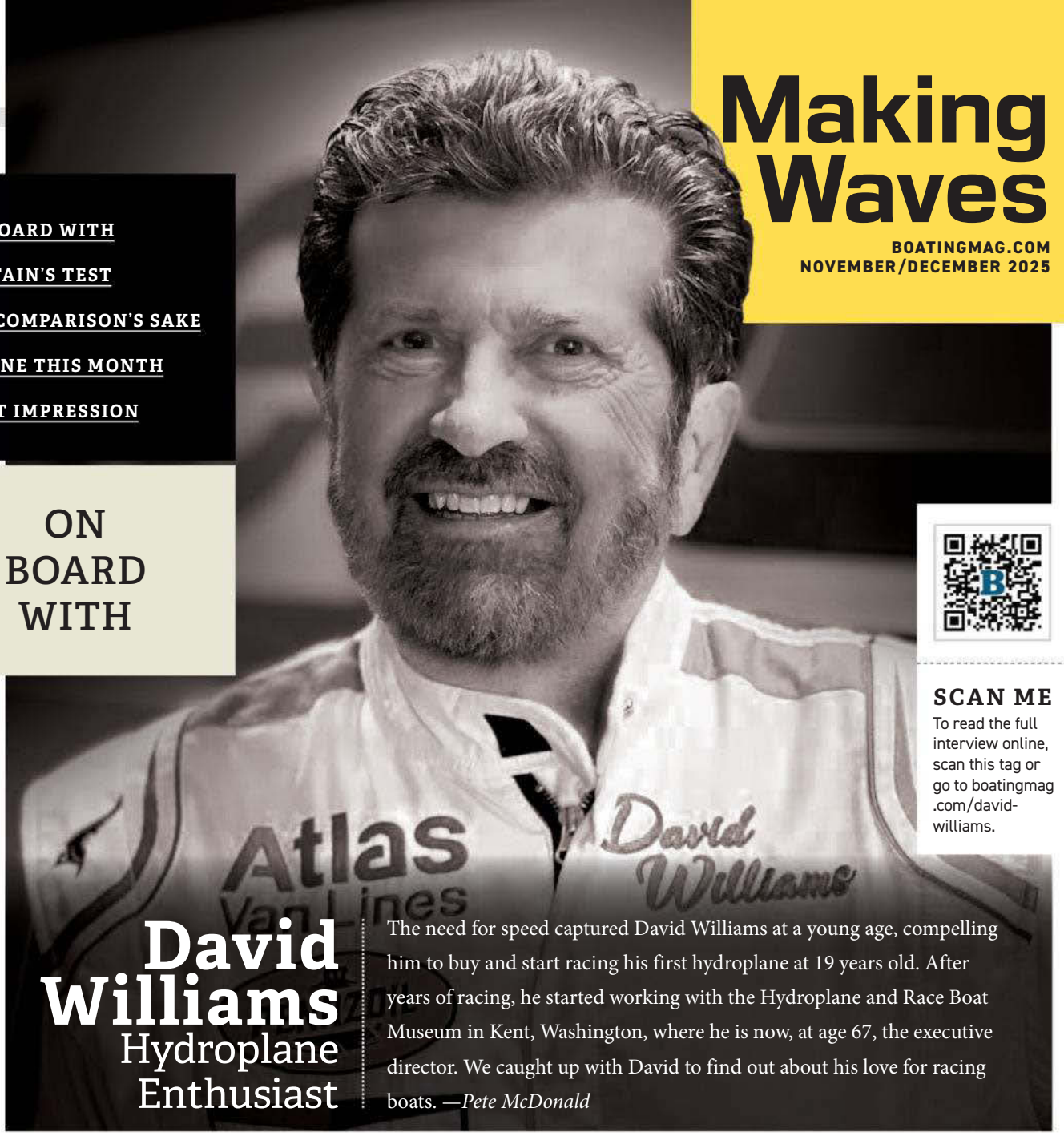


SCAN ME
To read the full interview online, scan this tag or go to boatingmag.com/david-williams.

David Williams
Hydroplane Enthusiast

The need for speed captured David Williams at a young age, compelling him to buy and start racing his first hydroplane at 19 years old. After years of racing, he started working with the Hydroplane and Race Boat Museum in Kent, Washington, where he is now, at age 67, the executive director. We caught up with David to find out about his love for racing boats. —*Pete McDonald*

Did you grow up on the water?
My father was an avid sailor. Growing up, we had a number of sailboats. I learned to handle a boat long before I learned to drive a car, and I spent countless days sailing on Puget Sound with my family.

When did you first start hydroplane racing?
I was 5 years old in 1963 when I saw my first race. I fell in love with the sights and sounds of the sport. The boats' bright colors and their flashing roostertails were stunning, and the throaty roar of the engines sounded like music. I immediately started scheming to get my own boat and by 1977 I had my own limited inboard hydroplane.

What is it about the sport that you love most?
As with any love affair, the things you find attractive change over the years. At first, it was the spectacle of speed, power and noise. Later, it was the boats. They were so beautiful and graceful that I was fascinated by them. Now it is the people.

What's the fastest you've gone in a boat?
It was 193 mph while testing the 2007 *Miss Lakeridge Paving* turbine unlimited!

When did you get involved with the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum?
It was September 13, 1993. It was my birthday and I decided to treat myself and go visit this cool new museum that I had heard about.

What is the museum's mission?
The mission of the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum is to honor, celebrate and preserve the history of hydroplane racing.

What's your ideal day on the water?
After spending most of my life careening over the water at 173 mph, my ideal day on the water would be cruising through Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands at a sedate 12 or 17 mph.

PHOTO: COURTESY HYDROPLANE AND RACEBOAT MUSEUM

WINTERIZING

Outboard boaters with four-stroke engines don't need to bring the boat to a dealer to winterize for off-season layup. With a little savvy, patience and some information, you can do it yourself. Do you know the ins and outs of prepping for winter layup? Let's find out. —*John Tiger* (Answers on page 19)

1. What should you do to the engine to help keep your outboard's fuel injectors clean and free from stale fuel and carbon deposits?

A. Run engine with a few drops of Dawn dish soap in the fuel. "Dawn keeps grease out of your way!"

B. For your last start-up of the season, first condition the fuel with Gas-Shok or a similar fuel conditioner. Then, while running the engine, inject most of a can of Engine Tuner, Power Tune, Sea Foam or equivalent into the engine's intakes while running the engine at a fast-idle speed. Shut the engine down, wait overnight, then start the engine again and inject the rest of the can into the intakes.

C. Nothing. You will harm the engine by injecting anything but regular fuel.

D. Run the engine wide open for six hours before layup.

2. Should you change the engine powerhead oil and filter before winter layup, or when recommissioning in the spring?

A. Change the oil and filter now, before layup. This ensures that the engine has fresh oil coating all its internal parts, with no contaminants or water/condensation in the oil.

B. Wait until spring, as the forecast for oil shows that prices will be lower.

C. Change the filter now and the oil in spring.

D. None of the above. You should only change the oil in summer, when the boat is in use.

3. Your boat has 80 gallons of fresh fuel aboard. Should you drain the boat's fuel supply before putting the rig up for winter?

A. Don't do anything. Today's fuels are very resilient and won't go stale.

B. Drain all the fuel out and use it in your tow vehicle.

C. Add plenty of fuel conditioner (tip: use double what the manufacturer recommends in the instructions) and run the engine for at least 30 minutes to ensure the treated fuel gets into the engine thoroughly.

D. Disconnect the fuel line and run the engine so it runs out of fuel. Don't worry about the fuel in your tank.

4. What should you do to prepare your engine's gear case (lower unit) for winter?

A. Nothing. It needs no maintenance.

B. Drain the lubricant and leave it empty for winter.

C. Drain the lubricant, checking for water intrusion (milky appearing lube). If the lube is milky or burnt and black, have the gear case serviced before layup. If you can't have it serviced, at least refill with fresh lube and remember to have it serviced before spring.

D. Clean and wax it, remove the propeller, and grease the prop shaft. Have the propeller serviced and reconditioned if it's damaged.

E. A or B are both fine.

F. C and D

PHOTO: AMNATDPP / ADOBE STOCK

5. Why should you drain the gear case and refill with fresh lubricant?

A. Just like your car, it's time for a lube change.

B. The engine will feel fresher and want to perform better with new lubricant.

C. The old lubricant may have water in it due to a seal leak, and that water will rust gears, shafts and bearings over the winter if left in the gear case.

D. Older, used lubricant will not cling to gears, bearings and shafts, therefore, will not provide the protection to these critical parts like fresh lube will.

E. C and D

F. None of the above

6. What about water in the engine's cooling passages? Will it freeze and crack the block when the temperature drops below freezing?

A. You should pump antifreeze through the engine to prevent freezing.

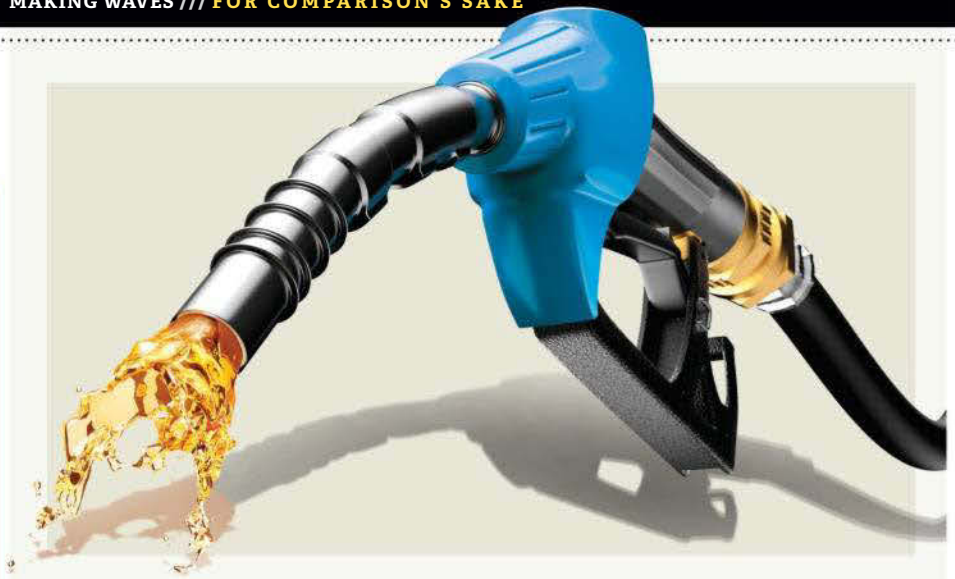
B. The water in the engine stays warm in winter because it's inside.

C. Outboards are self-draining; tilt the engine all the way down (vertical; not tucked all the way in), so all water runs out of the propeller, and it will be fine even in the lowest temperatures. But be sure all water drains from the propeller hub.

D. If you have to store it tilted, run the water out first, then tape over the propeller hub so no water gets inside.

E. C and D

F. None of the above



GASOLINE RATINGS

We see the numbers every day at the local gas station, with gas sold based on octane ratings. Most people go to the lower number—usually 87—because it's the cheapest, but what do the ratings mean, especially for your boat? First and foremost, the best fuel for your boat is ethanol-free gas, as ethanol scavenges water and causes phase separation, which can gum up your fuel system over time. Without access to that (check with your local marina, where you'll most likely find it), avoid any gas with over an E10 ethanol mix. Beyond that, a fuel's octane rating denotes its stability during the ignition phase. The higher the rating, the less likely it is to prematurely ignite and cause engine knocking. Here's a quick rundown of the different octane ratings. *—Pete McDonald*

87

THE BURN: The most common gasoline because it's the least expensive, 87 fuel is fine for most marine outboard and inboard engines. Check your owner's manual. If your engine requires only 87 gas, spending more on 89 or higher won't improve your engine's performance or help you run any faster than it would burning regular 87.

THE KNOCK: While any engine can burn 87 and likely be fine, it can cause knocking in engines that require 91 fuel or higher, which could impede overall performance.

89

THE BURN: If your engine experiences knocking from using 87 fuel, jumping up to 89 could solve the problem without resorting to high-performance gasoline, which can cost upwards of a dollar or more per gallon. Consider it a happy medium if 87 isn't working for you but 91 or higher is overkill for you.

THE KNOCK: With high-performance engines that require 91 gas or higher, 89 will work but still might not be enough to prevent knocking and could impede the engine from optimal running.

91-PLUS

THE BURN: High-performance and racing engines, especially those with a turbos or superchargers, create more heat and pressure during operation, which could cause lower-rated gasoline to prematurely ignite and cause knocking and potential engine damage. In some cases, using lower-rated gasoline on an engine that requires a higher-octane rating can even void the warranty, so check your owner's manual.

THE KNOCK: It's way more expensive and, if your engine doesn't need it, offers no benefit to your boat's performance.

CAPTAIN'S TEST ANSWERS

(Answers from page 18)

1. A. Condition the fuel with a good, quality fuel conditioner and run the engine long enough to get the conditioned fuel into the engine.

2. A. Change the oil before layup. This is the best practice for the reasons noted.

3. C. Use a good fuel conditioner and "over dose" if possible. More is better, not enough is very risky.

4. F. These are the best steps to prep your gear case for the winter, and make sure it's ready for use come spring.

5. E. Water will separate from the lubricant and rust your gear case's inner workings, making it a ticking time bomb next season. Plus, old gear lube is "worn out" and won't cling to gears, bearings and shafts like fresh lube will.

6. E. If water gets into the gear case via the propeller exhaust hub, it may freeze and expand over the winter and crack the gear-case housing—an expensive mistake.

CAPTAIN'S TESTS ONLINE

Test your knowledge of boating with more Captain's Tests at boatingmag.com/captains-test.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

OLD MAN WINTER

For much of the country, it's time to put the boat on blocks or in storage until spring finally springs. For all of you affected by Old Man Winter, it's crucial to properly winterize your boat. Lucky for you we have a whole section of our website dedicated to winterization. Scan this tag or go to boatingmag.com/guide-to-winterizing-your-boat.

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Depth in inches of the largest snowfall recorded in Florida, which happened last January in Milton, Florida.

PHOTO: PHIVE2015 / ADOBE STOCK; SOURCE FOR STATISTIC: VARIOUS NEWS OUTLETS

By Kevin Falvey

NAUTIQUE
ALL-NEW SKI NAUTIQUE

PHOTO: COURTESY NAUTIQUE BOAT COMPANY

With more personal bests and world records than any other water-ski boat in history, the Ski Nautique stands as the most-coveted and best-selling ski boat in the world.

Completely redesigned, and significantly lighter than the previous generation, the 2026 Ski Nautique seamlessly integrates ease of use with unprecedented performance.

The Ski Nautique incorporates a proprietary method of combining carbon fiber and fiberglass, plus an all-new integrated stringer system that is infused into the hull for a perfect balance of strength and weight. In tandem with the patented MicroTuner and redesigned HydroGate technology, it creates naturally flatter wakes with more support in the troughs, resulting in gains across the range of speeds and line lengths. The Ski Nautique is a USA Water Ski-approved tournament tow boat, sanctioned for use in International Waterski & Wakeboard Federation events worldwide.

From its 1961 debut to the present, the Ski Nautique defines three-event water-skiing.

Available with PCM ZZ5 (355 hp/405 ft.-lb.) or ZZ6 (450 hp/465 ft.-lb.) engines, the Ski Nautique has been seen for $135,000.

• **LOA:** 20'0" • **BEAM:** 7'10" • **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 2,800 lb. • **FUEL CAPACITY:** 28 gal.

NAUTIQUE
Orlando, Florida; nautique.com

FI
FIRST IMPRESSION

By Kevin Falvey

MJM YACHTS
38RS

PHOTO: COURTESY MJM YACHTS

Here is MJM's new cruiser-sportfisherman hybrid, the 38RS. Based on the MJM 38R cruiser, the 38RS adds fishing functionality.

Working with Zurn Yacht Design, MJM created a layout that allows owners to take advantage of the boat's fishability, according to MJM Yachts President and CEO Natascia Hatch.

The versatile MJM 38RS offers an open, aft cockpit with transom doors that expand the fishing area to the swim platform. A 40-gallon livewell with an 800-gph recirculating pump and rounded corners is on centerline. Two insulated fish boxes store your catch. MJM included six rocket launchers on the hardtop, two rod holders on the livewell and four more in the gunwales. A gunwale-mounted, removable bait-prep station is also standard.

The 38RS offers the comfort of a 360-degree pilothouse with large, sliding side windows, ensuring all aboard can shelter from wind and rain. Below, the new cabin layout adds a head with a stand-alone shower and a large convertible V-berth. Privacy curtains and Dometic blinds are now standard, as are upgraded designer fabrics and interior wallcoverings.

Expect 50-plus mph from twin Mercurys to 400 hp. The price was not available at press time.

• **LOA:** 38'6" **BEAM:** 11'0" • **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 13,200 lb. • **FUEL CAPACITY:** 250 gal.

MJM YACHTS
Washington, North Carolina; mjmyachts.com

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By Pete McDonald

ANALOG NAVIGATION

Old-school seamanship techniques you still need to know.

During a recent on-water technology test, I pressed a button, sat back and let the boat dock itself. The boat in question not only had automatic-docking technology with joystick controls, it had a full radar system, AIS, autopilot, collision alarms, charting software displaying our position in fine detail and cameras showing every angle of the boat on flush-mounted touchscreen displays.

The technology at our fingertips makes the job of captaining a boat easier and safer than it's ever been. That said, there are still plenty of things that have nothing to do with electronics that you should know. Here's a quick rundown of seamanship skills that don't need AC/DC power, just brain power.

READING PAPER CHARTS Today's charting software lets you know exactly where you are on the water at all times, as well as your course heading and your deviation. You should still carry paper charts on board as a back-up and, at the very least, know how to read the symbols and terminology on both a paper and electronic chart. The easiest way to learn it all is to head to NOAA's Symbol Legend for US Nautical Charts, known as Chart No. 1, at nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/publications/us-chart-1.html. Download the file and get to know the difference between a green parallelogram and a green rectangle symbol.

USING A COMPASS A dash-mounted compass used to be a standard feature aboard most boats. If you don't have one, get one. You'll need it to keep the proper heading on a paper chart. Every chart will have a compass rose, with an outer ring indicating true north, and an inner circle showing magnetic north, the direction to the magnetic pole. On the chart, magnetic north will have a smaller arrow pointing slightly off-kilter to the star that indicates true north. Your boat's compass will follow magnetic north, allowing you to set a bearing based on 360 degrees—with 0 being north, 90 being east, 180 being south and 270 being west. When out of sight of land or any navigation markers, or when its dark or foggy, using the compass bearing helps ensure you're heading in the right direction.

RULE OF THIRDS In the old days of analog fuel gauges, the needle swinging between empty and full was always notoriously unreliable. For this reason, it was very important to know your engine's fuel-burn rate in both miles per gallon and gallons per hour. Using these numbers, you could estimate how much fuel you burned on a given cruise and know how much fuel you needed for the rest of the day and to get home. Today's digital displays accurately show how much fuel you have left in the tank and may even show your total range based on your engine's rpm as you cruise. It's still good practice to live by the rule of thirds: use a third of your tank to get where you're going, keep a third in reserve to get home, and save the last third for variables and emergencies. Of note, we derived all our testing range numbers based on 90 percent of a fuel tank's capacity, and you should do the same. This accounts for the last gallons in the tank that may fall below both the sending unit and the pickup tube.

RULE OF 60 When using paper charts, this is a good one to know. The 60-to-1 rule is a principle used in navigation, both in aviation and in boating, stating that after traveling 60 nautical miles, a 1-degree error in your course will result in your being 1 nautical mile off track. It is a mathematical rule of thumb used to estimate angles for determining track and heading changes. For example, if you are 1 mile off course after boating for 10 miles, you are 6 degrees off course.

This rule is a technique that supports the fundamental responsibilities of safe vessel operation outlined in the Navigation Rules, or COLREGS. These rules, which include maintaining a proper lookout, proceeding at a safe speed, and determining the risk of collision, are vital to preventing accidents. The rule is particularly useful for correcting a course due to factors such as wind or current.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP LEFT) ANDREI ARMIAGOV / ADOBE STOCK; BILL DOSTER

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INTRODUCING THE

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At 629 pounds, Yamaha's new V6 Offshore F350 is a featherweight knockout. Stealing all the best design cues and advanced features from its V6 and V8 siblings, the new F350 is the dawn of a new power platform. It's also the lightest F350 in its class—by more than 65 pounds. Pair it with Helm Master® EX and Siren 3 Pro for exhilarating boating and incredible control in a powerfully light design. **THE ALL-NEW YAMAHA 4.3L V6 OFFSHORE F350.**

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YAMAHA

BOAT DOCTOR

BOATINGMAG.COM
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

Q&A

By Michael "Mick" Hannock

CHARGE! AGM and lithium batteries need more than just a charge. They need the conditioning and maintenance of a high-tech charger.

LITHIUM?

Q: Dear Boat Doc, I am considering adding, or switching entirely to, lithium-type batteries for my boat. It seems that some of these batteries are now rated as "starting" or "dual-purpose" batteries. That being the case, I could use them in place of the conventional flooded-cell lead-acid batteries I have now. (These are due for replacement anyway, being four years old.) What do you think? Can I, or should I, spring for lithium batteries? I cruise the Mississippi River in my single-engine boat.

Jerry Humphries
Des Moines, Iowa

A: Your plan is sound. Lithium offers the advantages of much more power in the same footprint. For the same physical-size battery—but lighter in weight, generally—you'll net higher starting amperage and more accessory run time. There are some considerations.

First, check with your engine maker. Not all recommend lithium batteries.

Second, invest in a modern, smart battery charger that can not only charge your lithium batteries properly, but condition and maintain them properly. As battery technology has advanced, so has the role of the charger in keeping the battery performance up to snuff.

You are on the same path as the editor-in-chief, Kevin Falvey. Look for his report detailing making the switch to lithium starting/dual-purpose batteries coming soon.

Finally, if you go for it, let me know how it works out and what engine(s) you are running. Maybe Falvey will use your experience in his article. Good luck.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) WAWAN / ADOBE STOCK, COURTESY OPTIMA BATTERIES

GLUE THE SCREW I recently helped install a new pump in a boat that offered only one-handed access to the bilge compartment where this pump was to be mounted. To make things more interesting, the location was at full arm's reach distance from the deck plate through which the install took place. The working position was one cheek on the deck while up to my armpit in a black hole. And I just couldn't get them started. So, I superglued the screws to my screwdriver with just a dot of glue.

The glue held the screw to the driver's tip, which extended my reach, and allowed me to insert the screw in its hole. As each screw came tight, though, the glue bond broke, freeing the tool to drive the next screw. (A subsequent test showed that once the bond broke, the screw's Phillips head remained clear.)

There are other ways to solve this challenge. Fabricating a long, L-shaped bracket that could itself be fastened higher in the bilge while locating the pump deep is one of these. I suggested this to the boat's owner as a winter project. *—Kevin Falvey*

STUCK WHEEL

Q: Dear Boat Doctor, I am trying to remove the steering wheel of my boat. I have removed the nut, but the wheel just won't budge. Can you help?

A. Darby
Springfield, Massachusetts

A: Because it's on a tapered shaft, it does get stuck. Here's what I do: Remove the nut and washer, then rethread the nut on partway so that part of it is sticking past the end of the shaft, protecting the threads. Now, while pulling/pushing on the wheel from behind with one knee and one forearm, rap the shaft with a dead-blow hammer. It should pop off. You can also use a bearing puller to remove the steering wheel.

BOARD-RACK INSTALLATION

Q: Dear Boat Doctor, we often take our boat to the beach to surf. Now we are foiling too, both behind our center-console, which makes enough wake/wave for the foil to "fly" in the ocean. What is the best way to carry boards on our boat?

Seamus Kavanaugh
Wickford, Rhode Island

A: Much depends on the specifics of the boat. If you have an arch or hardtop that goes out to the gunwales, as opposed to a T-top, you can look at board racks from a variety of companies. If you have space under the gunwales, Sea Sucker makes a great suction-cup-mounted rack for boards. No real installation is required, and the suction cups work well. Just make sure to try your boards in the spot to see if they fit.

Foils, assembled together with the board, present a different challenge and are best stowed upside down, foil up. The top of a hardtop is the best place to do this. By installing a set of rails across the top, you can place the foilboard, inverted on the rails, and then strap or tie it down. Or fit a dedicated rack to those rails.

BOGGING DOWN

Q: Our boat engine bogs down after running for a little while. I have changed the filters, and there is no kink or restriction in the fuel line. What could it be?

John Amantado
Orlando, Florida

A: While the problem could be electrical, make sure the vent fitting is clear and its hose is not kinked or obstructed. Often, bugs build nests in fuel-vent fittings. These so-called mud wasps have ruined more than one outing. Make sure your fuel-tank vent is clear.

NICKED CABLE

Q: The cover of my boat's steering cable has some nicks in it, back in the motorwell, where it comes sideways out of the boat and connects to the outboard. My brother-in-law says to wrap it in tape and it should be fine. Right now, the steering works perfectly. What should I do?

Albert Lauter
White Plains, New York

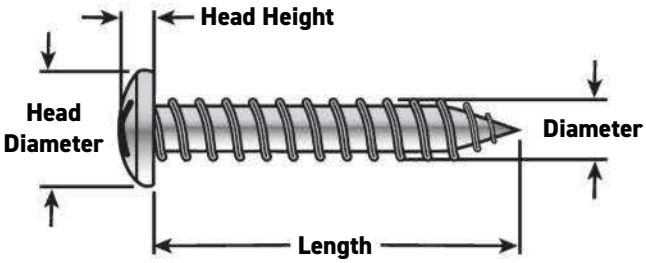
A: If the jacket of a steering or control cable is nicked, corrosion and failure will follow. You could lose control of your boat. Change the cable.

SCREWED

Q: Dear Doctor, I am a faithful reader, but here's a question I have not seen you address: When screwing into fiberglass, what type of thread is best?

Art Purdy
Mobile, Alabama

A: It really depends on the situation. Always pre-drill screw holes a smaller diameter than the screw. Pilot-hole size charts are readily available online to match hole size to fastener size.



Most often, there will be wood, foam or composite coring into which the threads can bite, after penetrating the glass layer. If the substrate is just a thin glass panel (less than ⅜-inch thick), I'd use a rivet before using a screw—that is, if I couldn't access the rear and use a nut. Machine screws, or bolts, and nuts are what I prefer, when they can be used.

A little-known consideration is that solid fiberglass of about ⅜-inch thickness or more can be tapped with threads. Then you can use a machine screw as a fastener. This is an alternative to rivets, or butterfly bolts, in situations where you cannot get to the other side. It is especially sturdy if adhesive is used on the item as well as the fasteners. Don't overtighten when using this technique.

PHOTO: STUDIOWORKSTOCK / ADOBE STOCK; ILLUSTRATION: RYAN SWANSON / *BOATING*

WE TEST STUFF

ODYSSEY OBC-15-A MARINE BATTERY CHARGER

The Odyssey OBC-15-A marine battery charger is lightweight and engineered to handle 12-volt AGM, flooded lead-acid batteries, and lithium batteries ($LiFePO_4$, Li-Fe, Li-iron, LFP). This comprehensive compatibility makes it an ideal choice for boat owners who may have different battery types across their vessels.

Because it can sense voltage as low as 1.5 volts, it can recover fully depleted batteries, and I have found it does that reliably. I've used it to recharge and maintain depleted tractor, boat and ATV batteries. With a maximum of 15 amps of charging power, batteries are brought back to serviceability quickly. The unique Supply Mode pushes power to fully depleted batteries that are undetectable by most automatic chargers. Supply Mode can also be used to bench test 12-volt accessories. Selecting between battery types is easy by toggling through until an LED illuminates the mode you want.

The OBC-15-A offers impressive specifications, including an input of 110-120VAC (US) or 220-240VAC (EU), with a constant output of 15A at 12V. With an IP44 rating, it's splash- and dust-proof, making it suitable for marine environments. It comes with a three-year warranty for peace of mind. Additional features include built-in temperature controls, a battery status indicator for easy monitoring, and fully automatic charging after battery type selection. At just 4.60 pounds and measuring 9.25-by-5.12-by-2.50 inches, this charger is both powerful and portable—perfect for marine applications where space is often at a premium. $275.99; odysseybattery.com —*Randy Vance*

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY ODYSSEY BATTERIES, KEVIN FALVEY

WAX ON!

Q: Greetings from northern Michigan! What is a good brand of wax to use on my Four Winns boat? I can tell you from experience auto wax isn't working. Make it a great day.

Jay Balog
Via email

A: There are pure waxes designed simply to provide shine at one end of the spectrum and then there are "cleaner waxes," which have varying degrees of grit and cleaning power incorporated. Results will vary with the type of wax and also by method of application. Check out this Boating Lab test of waxes: boatingmag.com/gear/boatinglab-tests-waxes/ to decide what your specific waxing needs and objectives might be.

BEADY AYES

Q: Is it necessary to smooth out caulk after applying it on my boat?

Don Jackson
Meredith, Minnesota

A: Yes. A smooth bead attracts less dirt, seals better, and is easier to clean. Ripples can trap grime and become potential leak points. Plus, a neat bead simply looks better and shows pride in your work.

NAUTICAL NO-NO

BLOCKING A BOAT

The boat (pictured) is not properly supported. There is no support along the keel at the transom. Whether using blocks, cribbing or boat stands, to store a boat on land, the majority of the boat's weight should be carried by support along the keel.

At a minimum, every boat should have at least two keel supports. Spacing one keel support every 10 feet of boat length is what the pros consider standard practice.

There should always be support at the transom—that's where the weight of the engines bears down. And blocking should be placed beneath the location of athwartship structural members such as beneath bulkheads (the transom is essentially a bulkhead) to help ensure the hull doesn't deform during storage. Many builders identify the best places to locate hull support during dry storage. Ask.

Many hulls have developed hooks, twist and other maladies as a result of improper dry storage. Moreover, without proper keel support, the boat stands or other supports can fail and cause the boat to fall, possibly injuring somebody. For more details about safe and proper dry storage for boats, visit boatingmag.com/how-to/boat-stand-safety. —*K.F.*

READER TIP

Q: I recommend that your readers check trailer hubs for heat after a short drive. I learned the value of this long ago. Warm hubs are OK; hot hubs are bad. If they're hot to the touch, the wheel bearings likely need replacement or rebuilding before continuing a long trip.

Don McMillan
Ocean Springs, Mississippi

A: Thanks, Don—solid advice!

READER RECOMMENDATION

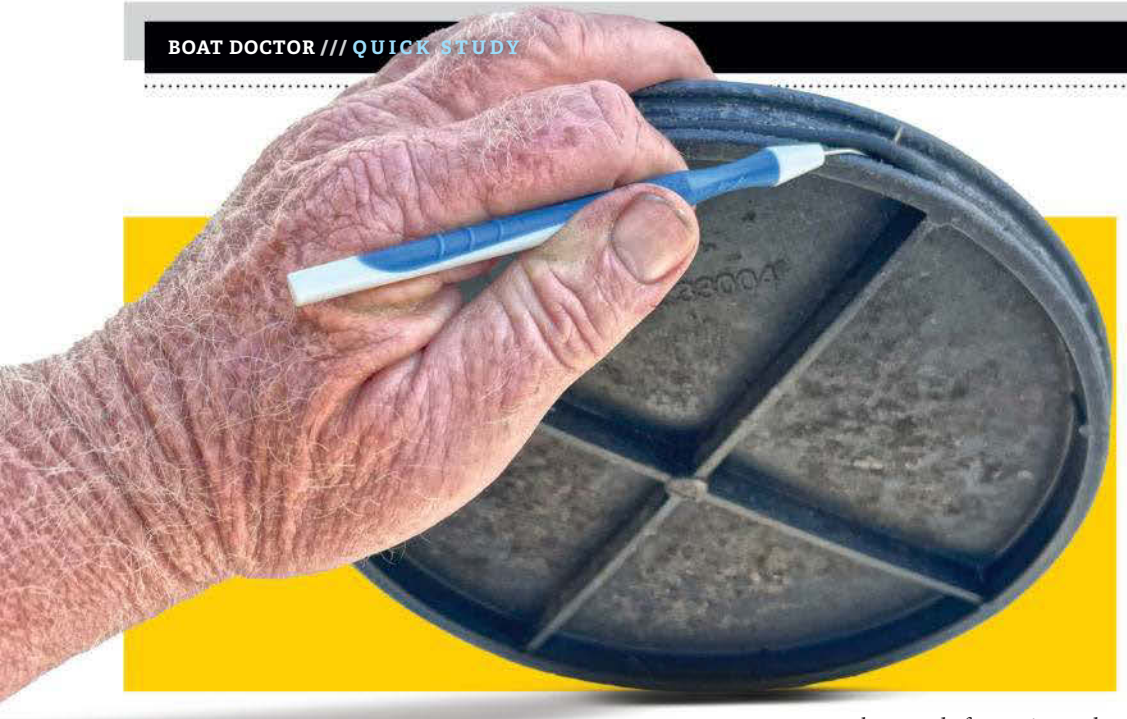
Q: Hi, Mick, your columns are great! You may remember helping me with my MerCruiser's stalling-while-turning problem some years back. Well, now, I would like to help other fellow boaters. Here is the name of a company making plastic windshields that worked out well for me: updplastics.com. Keep up the great work!

Anthony Wisnewski
Chicago, Illinois

A: Thanks, Anthony. It is always good to get direct testimonial from a fellow boater. I'm happy to pass this on to our readers.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Send questions to Mick with your name and boating location to boatdr@boatingmag.com.



CHANGE GASKETS AND O-RINGS

Keep water from going where it doesn't belong.

Boat maintenance might be grouped into two categories: obvious tasks and not-so obvious tasks. Charging the batteries, waxing the hull and repairing a ding in the gelcoat represent obvious tasks. Renewing caulking, going around the boat and tightening fasteners and replacing gaskets and O-rings fall into the category of what some would name less-obvious tasks.

It's that last job—changing gaskets and O-rings that we will concern ourselves with in this installment of Quick Study. This is an easy DIY boating task, yet essential to your boat and engine's overall performance. —*Kevin Falvey*

FUEL FILLS Your boat's fuel fill (or fills) is fitted with a cap that seals out water by way of an O-ring located at the top of the threads, abutting the cap's flange. Tighten down the cap, and the rubber O-ring compresses slightly to keep water out of your fuel. Over time, O-rings can be damaged and fail from age. A failed O-ring allows water from rain, spray and washing the boat to contaminate your boat's fuel supply. Inspect the fuel cap O-ring every time you fill up and replace it as needed.

SERVICE ACCESS POINTS Many boats utilize deck plates or hatches to provide access to the bilge, or other spaces, "inside" the boat. Whether they're screw-out, pry-out, or hinged, these access openings will have an O-ring or bulb-gasket fitted around the perimeter of the cover or lid or opening. Over time, these can break down and allow water into the bilge. It may not sink your boat (although that's possible), but allowing water in tends to increase the spread of corrosion and mold. Inspect these regularly and replace as needed. Note: Many boaters damage the gaskets protecting pry-out plates by prying all around the perimeter instead of only at the indent that the maker built in for that purpose.

STOWAGE LOCKER LIDS Stowage lockers, external doors to head compartments and more may use a bulb-gasket or weather stripping to keep water out of the area behind them. Often, the seal is compressed as the door or lid is latched, making it watertight. Over time, due to repeated compression, the seal or gasket loses its "body" and needs to be replaced. Glue-on or peel-and-stick self-adhesive weather stripping requires a scrape and solvent wipe to prep the application area before installing new material.

TOOLS FOR THE JOB A dental pick, or a small flat-bladed screwdriver, can help remove old gaskets and O-rings. For adhesive weather stripping, I use a small putty knife—one that I have rounded-off the corners on and sharpened its edge. Solvent can be used to remove weather-stripping adhesive on fiberglass. On plastic hatches, lids and plates, stick to soap and water. For new O-rings and gaskets, apply a dab of Teflon lube to help it seat and seal.

SOURCING REPLACEMENTS You'll often find the maker's name embossed or engraved right on hatches, deck plates and so forth, and sometimes on the underside of the lid or removable section. Seek them out as most makers usually sell direct replacement seals. You can also purchase O-rings at quality hardware stores—just be sure they are fuel-resistant if destined for your boat's fuel fill. Teflon lube can be purchased through marine-supply houses. Weather stripping can be purchased from makers such as Taco Marine (tacomarine.com). Measure the width of the old stuff; the thickness can often be ascertained by examining a section between latches or hinges where compression is least. Jim Hendricks' Weekend Workbook on this topic goes into the nitty gritty at boatingmag.com/how-to/how-to-add-hatch-seals.

PHOTOS: KEVIN FALVEY

SOLARA

S-250 DC S-250 CW S-250 C S-310 CW S-310 SC

THE S-250 DC

DUAL CONSOLE

SCAN FOR FUN

OUTBOARD WATER-PUMP REPLACEMENT

These 12 steps help ensure good cooling.

Salt, sand, and debris take their toll on your outboard's water-pump impeller, housing, and related parts. Despite many "I've never replaced the water pump" stories, good preventative maintenance practice includes replacement of the pump and housing at regular intervals—annually is best.

STAND UP You'll need a stand or support for the gear case (aka leg or lower unit) once you have removed it. Smaller ones can be clamped into a bench vise, with wood pads on the jaws. Larger ones require a dedicated stand.

Because every engine is different, these instructions are general. Buy a service manual, such as a Seloc manual, for your specific engine before attempting this job. Then budget an hour or so to remove the gear case, replace the pump, then reinstall the gear case.

1 Disconnect the shift cable under the engine cowl. It will be easy to see if your helper shifts the control as you watch the cable. There also might be a shift-rod connection to address. Most Mercury and Yamaha engines have a shift-rod connection in the gear case that slides apart; Johnson and Evinrude engines have a connection under the cowl. Many manufacturers specify that the unit be in forward gear or neutral or reverse, and stay there until you reinstall the lower unit. The specific procedure will be described in your manual.

2 Next, make the unit as light to handle as you can. Remove the propeller and any planing plates. If your engine is larger (over 60 to 70 hp), the unit will be hefty. Be sure that you can tilt the engine high enough and you have room to extract the gear case and drive shaft from the outboard.

3 You'll need a stand to hold the gear case after it's off the outboard. A wooden stand can be fashioned and used again. Clamp smaller units in a vise by the skeg. Pad the jaws of the vise with wood to protect the finish.

SHAFTED An outboard engine's water pump is driven by the driveshaft. Here the author is shown sliding the water-pump housing into place.

4 Typically, there are two or three bolts securing the lower unit on each side of the engine. There also might be a bolt in the front. Usually there is at least one or two hidden fasteners under the antiventilation plate. Before you completely remove that last bolt or nut, prepare yourself to catch the gear case in case it drops right out.

5 Carefully pull the unit down and away from the engine. You might have to coax it with some careful wiggling and prying. "Choice words" sometimes get voiced at this stage.

6 Use compressed air to clear debris from the intake passages and the area surrounding the pump. After removing the pump and the impeller plate, use the extended air-gun tip to reach down into the intake passages and blow out any accumulated silt. Blow compressed air up into the brass water tube in the engine midsection to clear any debris. Pull the impeller up and off the driveshaft, and remove the old Woodruff key, which should be replaced by a new one.

PHOTOS: JOHN TIGER

PARTS IS PARTS Boaters commonly say that their engine "needs a new impeller." In actuality, an engine's cooling water pump includes many parts that should be replaced, including a wear plate, gaskets, O-rings and more.

IMPELLER The impeller is the heart of the water pump. Its vanes push cooling water through the system to maintain the engine's operating temperature.

7 Install a new Woodruff key. When sliding the impeller down the driveshaft, align the slot in the impeller with the Woodruff key. Be sure of proper impeller rotation, which is clockwise, then install the pump housing on top of the impeller while turning the driveshaft so that the vanes compress in the proper direction. Use a dab of engine oil on the impeller vanes of the impeller so that it's prelubricated upon startup of the engine. This also makes compressing the vanes easier.

8 Use any sealants called for by your engine's manual. Carefully tighten the housing screws. Do not overtorque, or you might crack the housing and cause a leak later, which could lead to overheating. This is also a great time to drain, check, and refill the gear lubricant.

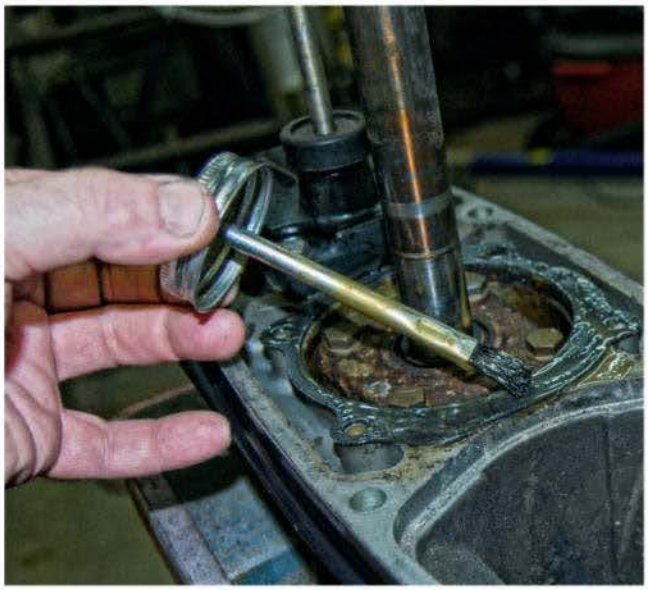
9 Remember that the gear case must be in the correct gear before installation. Don't move the shift rod at all, or else you might have a hard time reinstalling the lower unit.

FIT AND SEAL Above, we see the author about to fit the impeller into the water-pump housing. It's important that the impeller vanes are oriented the correct way: clockwise. Applying the proper sealant (right).

10 Clean the top of the driveshaft, then dab marine grease on the splines—not on the top. Greasing the splines will make removal of the gear case easier next time. Be sure that the exhaust adapter is properly positioned in the midsection.

11 While sliding the unit up into the midsection, ensure that the driveshaft, shift shaft and water tube are positioned properly. If you miss, the engine will not receive cooling water and will overheat, or it won't shift properly and you'll have to remove and install it again.

12 After the installation is complete and you've reconnected the shift shaft and shift cable, start the engine and ensure that it is pumping water, running properly at the proper temperature, and shifting from neutral to forward and to reverse correctly. *—John Tiger*



PHOTOS: JOHN TIGER

By Randy Vance

DYNAMIC TRIM SYSTEMS

Automated attitude control and ride leveling systems make both a good skipper and a great boat better.

Trim tabs were once just a device fixed in place to lengthen a boat's running surface and provide lift to its transom for a quicker, more level hole shot. When Bennett first introduced adjustable hydraulic tabs (installed in pairs on each side of the transom), skippers quickly learned how to use them to adjust the ride for choppy water, crosswinds, and beam seas or to lift 350-pound Bubba Wilson and his side of the vessel.

Interceptors (usuallly in pairs) began to appear on boats 20 years ago, but it wasn't until recently that they entered the mainstream as wake-shaping tools in surf boats. It was advancements in micro-processing and actuator-response speeds that gave rise to this new approach to adjusting the ride.

Dynamic trim control systems employ inputs such as accelerometers, multi-axis sensors, GPS and sometimes gyros to measure a boat's changing speed, attitude, and list, then compensate for sudden position changes by signaling trim actuators to rapidly deploy or retract to apply stabilizing forces against crosswinds, beam seas and particularly head and following seas. We have even found that some dynamic trim systems completely mitigate the hazardous instability that occurs when a boat is passing over parallel wakes.

Boaters are only beginning to realize how much better a favorite vessel rides when the forces of the wind and sea are dampened by these systems.

PHOTOS: (COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP) TOM KING, COURTESY ZIPWAKE, COURTESY LENCO, COURTESY BENNETT MARINE, COURTESY SEAKEEPER RIDE

ZIPWAKE PRO

PRICE: FROM $4,050 TO $15,840; ZIPWAKE.COM
BOAT SIZE: UP TO 100 FEET

IN THE BOX: Control panel, integrator module, electrically actuated interceptors (two or more depending on vessel size).

WHAT THEY DO: Bladelike interceptors mount flush to the outside of a square transom (with the actuating electronic motor inside) and deploy vertically downward, creating a pressure wave ahead of the interceptor blade that lifts the stern. Gyros are built into the color LCD control panel to measure attitude and inertia of the vessel, and analyze it to deploy and retract the interceptors independently to meet opposing environmental forces and adjust the vessel's pitch and roll. This dampens pounding and corrects a list. In turns, it dampens heeling for a more comfortable ride. Interceptors can be controlled manually to adjust pitch and roll. Whether in manual or auto modes, the blades automatically retract at slower speeds and when the engine is turned off, saving them from damage from forklifting or trailering.

THE MANUFACTURER SAYS: The new Pro system is five times as fast as the previous Zipwake system, designed primarily to adjust pitch and roll in more stable conditions. The Pro system's quicker response improves the ride on vessels up to 100 feet in length, though boats of this size usually require more than one pair of interceptors.

WE TESTED: On a 28-foot runabout and a 43-foot catamaran, both vessels showed improvement in turns and decreases in bow rise. They also offered stabilizing assistance in difficult navigation conditions such as being overtaken by a parallel wake. All catamarans have a habit of heeling outward in turns, but with Zipwake Pro activated, the boat heeled comfortably, gently into the turn. The hole shot with these Zipwakes was a bit quicker, but more importantly, we experienced less bow rise to preserve most of our forward visibility on acceleration.

SEAKEEPER RIDE

PRICE: $4,500 TO $30,175 (DEPENDING ON HULL SIZE AND STYLE)
RIDE.SEAKEEPER.COM
BOAT SIZE: UP TO 55 FEET

IN THE BOX: Electric actuators (two or more depending on boat size), keypad, motion-sensing software module, distribution panel for system actuation, shim plates for level installation.

WHAT THEY DO: Ride uses sensors to measure pitch, yaw, roll and speed, and responds by cycling its blades up to 300 mm per second. With systems for boats ranging from 19 to 55 feet in length, the actuators are sealed and mounted on the outside of the transom, and the blades auto-retract at low speeds. The system interfaces with MFDs from Garmin, Simrad, Lowrance, Furuno and Raymarine, but a control keypad is available.

THE MANUFACTURER SAYS: Blades rotate at up to 300 mm per second to manage pitch and roll, and the manufacturer claims 70 percent improved stability over competitive products. However, it tested against the original Zipwake rather than the improved Zipwake Pro.

WE TESTED: On a Delta 245 CC, and aboard editor Jim Hendricks' 22 center-console, we found they were instrumental in maintaining control and smoothing out rough seas. Hendricks perception is that the system adds 5 feet of length to his boat in the operational feel and control.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY ZIPWAKE, COURTESY SEAKEEPER RIDE (2)

LENCO PRO CONTROL

PRICE: FROM $2,579.99 TO $3,769.99
LENCOMARINE.NAVICO.COM
BOAT SIZE: UP TO 30 FEET

IN THE BOX: A pair of electric actuators and tabs, control panel, position sensor and wiring harnesses.

WHAT THEY DO: Plate-style trim tabs are normally in the same plane as the boat's bottom surface until activated. Tilting the tabs downward puts upward pressure on them and creates a pressure wave that lifts the boat. A separate inertia measurement device updates the controller with rapidly changing conditions and directs the tabs up or down to counter them. This dampens pounding, rolling and in turns, it even dampens heeling inward, giving passengers a more comfortable ride. The tabs automatically retract at slower speeds and when the engine is turned off, saving them from damage from forklifting or trailering.

THE MANUFACTURER SAYS: The system makes boats up to 74 percent more stable by reducing pitch and roll, according to Lenco.

WE TESTED: We ran a Blackwood 29 with the Lenco tabs and found the Pro Control system comparable to other systems, but with a slower response rate, though its ability to maintain a specified attitude is comparable. When running along parallel wakes, it kept the boat under control, avoiding side surfing and bow steering.

BENNETT MARINE BOLT ELECTRIC TABS PLUS AUTOTRIMPRO

PRICE: FROM $1,300 (TABS AND CONTROLLER)
BENNETTTRIMTABS.COM
BOAT SIZE: UP TO 50 FEET

IN THE BOX: Pair of stainless-steel trim plates, actuators, 20-foot harness with waterproof connectors. Sold separately are the AutoTrimPro controller, inertia measuring unit and wiring harness.

WHAT THEY DO: Bennett Marine claims the throne for first to design tabs and we won't argue the point. The company has been around and knows its stuff. Bennett's AutoTrimPro is compatible with all of Bennett's tabs, with kits for both electric and hydraulic tab systems. The Electric Bolt Tabs are available for boats up to 50 feet. Because Bennett offers controllers a la carte, owners may be able to convert their current tab system with the AutoTrimPro system. It includes a controller with a built-in inertial measurement model to give tabs directions for adjusting attitude and leveling the boat automatically. The auto module allows quick shifting from manual to auto operation and will remember two favorite trim settings to automatically correct for an expected list.

MANUFACTURER SAYS: Response time on the tabs can be adjusted and customized for different boat dimensions and weights.

WE TESTED: We have not actually tested the new AutoTrimPro tabs on any vessels yet and look forward to it. However, we have run many boats with Bennett tabs and owned one with tabs that operated flawlessly seven years later.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY LENCO, COURTESY BENNETT MARINE

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BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3465

EVERGLADES 367CX

Crossover dayboats such as Everglade's new 367CX are designed as multi-activity boats with plenty of luxury.

PHOTO: COURTESY EVERGLADES BOATS

The 367CX is a versatile adventure boat designed for those who seek more than just standard fishing experiences. This meticulously crafted vessel merges premium construction with thoughtful design elements to create a truly multipurpose maritime platform. Its fishing features are comprehensive without overpowering the recreational angle of the design. Strategically placed rod holders on the transom and gunwales, a dedicated livewell, fish box, and tackle storage create its functional fishing environment. Yet the 367CX transcends the traditional fishing-boat role, establishing itself as an ideal platform for diverse marine activities.

The dive-friendly deck plan includes a convenient side boarding door with a removable dive

SCAN ME

To see an online photo gallery of the Everglades 367CX, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3465.

ladder, complemented by a transom door. The helm area is well-protected by a fully enclosed hardtop with a safety-glass windshield and side windows, creating a comfortable weather-resistant command center. Positioned starboard, the helm station features a carbon-fiber steering wheel as its centerpiece, allowing companions to flank the skipper on either side. The second row accommodates three additional passengers, with all seats boasting fold-down armrests and flip-up bolsters for customizable comfort even in potentially uncomfortable seas.

One particularly convenient design feature is the passage between the helm seat and portside gunwale, giving easy passage to and from the front-row seats without disturbing the captain—effectively creating dual aisles within the three-row seating arrangement. The front row's outside seats can rotate aft to establish a conversation area with second-row passengers. Perhaps most impressive is the second row's 180-degree swiveling capability, enabled by a well-finished fiberglass rotating platform that transforms these seats into a mezzanine position that allow a view aft to overlook the

PHOTOS: COURTESY EVERGLADES BOATS

cockpit's fishing action, or to watch the kids being towed on a tube.

The 367CX's climate-control capabilities are exceptional. The tall, walk-through windshield can be opened or closed as conditions dictate, and when closed alongside the wind dam at deck level, it effectively seals the main deck from external elements. Full-vessel air conditioning includes strategically placed vents at the dashboard and second-row seating areas. This cools the helm deck in spite of its open aft area, which faces the cockpit. The hardtop features an electrically operated sunroof, enhancing the connection with the outdoor environment when desired.

Below deck, the 367CX offers surprising comfort with a spacious cabin featuring a forward berth, mini-galley with microwave and refrigerator, and a well-appointed head compartment complete with a freshwater sink, shower, and toilet facilities. This thoughtful below-deck design transforms day trips into potential overnight adventures without sacrificing comfort.

> The intelligently designed passageway between the starboard helm seat and gunwale allows unobstructed movement without disturbing the captain, a subtle but significant feature enhancing onboard traffic flow during active operations.

The vessel's core structural integrity comes from Everglades' proprietary Ramcap construction process. This innovative technique utilizes high-density foam logs custom-molded to fill voids between stringers, deck, and hull, creating an unsinkable, remarkably solid vessel. The commitment to quality extends to every component—hardware consists of heavy-duty, highly polished stainless-steel hinges, latches and cleats.

Nobody else uses Ramcap construction—it was invented by Everglades boats and has proven to build sturdy models. But, Regal does build a 36 ($773,330) crossover that brings a greater focus on general recreation and downplays fishability. Formula's 389 SSC brings a 2-foot-longer centerline and 8 inches more beam and triple 300 Mercury Verados ($1,332,140) to give an idea of the price spread. Still, both vessels pamper the crew with aplomb. But for more serious angling, the Everglades fishing DNA stands tall.

Standard features abound throughout the 367CX, including a lifetime hull warranty, variable deadrise deep-V hull, self-bailing cockpit, and wood-free construction. The hull employs premium gelcoat with vinyl-ester barrier and knitted bi-axial fiberglass for long-term durability. Interior elements include authentic wood veneer storage cabinets with solid surface countertops, LED lighting, and premium finishing touches throughout. The console and hardtop assembly offer digital switching with touchscreen control, recessed storage with inductive cell-phone chargers, and an integrated hardtop with overhead LED lights, spreader lights, speakers, and electronics access hatch.

Our test boat was outfitted with twin Yamaha 450 hp outboards with Digital Electric Steering (DES) and Helm Master Full Maneuverability joystick for easy operation in close quarters. We suggest equipping your 367CX with 900 hp, whether you opt for Mercury or Yamaha power for optimum performance and resale.

Optional packages include an Electrical Convenience Package ($61,290) with a genset, air conditioning, hot water and more, a comprehensive Fishing Package ($3,700), and a variety of color upgrades to personalize the vessel. *—Randy Vance*

High Points

- The proprietary Ramcap construction creates an unsinkable vessel with a lifetime hull warranty.
- The rotating second-row seats swivel from forward-facing to mezzanine positions overlooking the cockpit.
- Full climate-control capabilities include vessel-wide air conditioning, safety-glass windshield, and electrically operated sunroof.

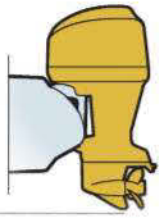
Low Points

- There is a half-glass helm deck enclosure for those who don't like the confinement of full glass.
- You can either have mezzanine seating in the cockpit or a rigging station, but not both when you might need it.
- It is feature rich. Keep the manuals handy.

• **LOA:** 36'3" • **BEAM:** 10'10" • **DRAFT (MAX):** 3'1.75" • **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 19,300 lb. • **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 20 degrees • **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 9'4.5" • **FUEL CAPACITY:** 330 gal. • **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 900 • **AVAILABLE POWER:** Mercury or Yamaha outboards to 900 hp

Price: $822,000
(with test power)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Twin Yamaha 450 XTO OS **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/16⅝" x 19" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.79:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 250 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 25 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 1,200 lb.

EVERGLADES BOATS
Edgewater, Florida; evergladesboats.com

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.2	4.9	3.5	1.2	1.4	357.6	411.6	0	70
1500	6.0	6.9	5.8	1.0	1.2	307.0	353.3	0	74
2000	8.1	9.3	8.9	0.9	1.0	269.7	310.3	0	76
2500	9.4	10.8	13.9	0.7	0.8	200.5	230.8	1	77
3000	12.3	14.2	21.0	0.6	0.7	174.5	200.8	4	82
3500	19.1	22.0	28.1	0.7	0.8	202.1	232.5	5	84
4000	27.1	31.2	34.6	0.8	0.9	232.7	267.8	3	86
4500	32.2	37.1	44.9	0.7	0.8	213.0	245.1	2	89
5000	36.4	41.9	52.3	0.7	0.8	206.5	237.7	1	91
5500	41.2	47.5	67.2	0.6	0.7	182.2	209.7	1	93
6000	46.1	53.1	69.5	0.7	0.8	197.2	226.9	1	92

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

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BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3466

BENETEAU ANTARES 9

When it comes to versatility and comfort, the Antares 9 shines as bright as its celestial namesake.

If anyone is wondering, "How can my family and I spend a perfect day or weekend on the water?" let me introduce you to the new Beneteau Antares 9. This is truly a boat for all reasons, making it one of brightest new models in the recreational boating market. Antares, by the way, is the brightest star in the constellation of Scorpius.

For day outings, the Antares 9 cockpit offers a 6-foot-wide U-shaped bench that, when the table is used as a fill, becomes a sun pad worthy of a bigger boat. That's not hype: A Beneteau hallmark is a cockpit lounge that slides aft when the engines are in the running position, increasing the cockpit space. When it's time to tilt the engines up into the storage position, the lounge slides forward 16 inches. This lounge locks securely in

PHOTO: COURTESY, BENETEAU AMERICA

SCAN ME

To see an online photo gallery of the Beneteau Antares 9, scan this tag or go to boatingmag.com/3466.

PHOTOS: COURTESY BENETEAU AMERICA

place in either position. Good thinking on Beneteau's part.

The protective hardtop stretches aft to fully cover the cockpit, providing sunburn protection for the family. A double slider serves as a companionway that essentially disappears and opens the cabin to the cockpit—and vice versa in fine weather. Access from the docks is easy through a door from the stern platform, or via a 24-inch boarding door to starboard with an optional swim ladder (order it to keep feet away from sharp props).

Speaking of engines, the Antares 9 features twin Mercury 200s as standard power. These produced 40 mph at wide-open throttle. If you pine for more power, don't. Bigger engines might bump the top speed by 6 mph. But there's enough oomph in these Mercury 200s to tow several giggling kids on water toys, they'll get you home fast if foul weather approaches, and they sip fuel (19.4 gph) at a fast cruise of 32 mph.

This is the latest Antares iteration from an earlier 9, and (frankly) vastly improved. The finish is the same as the 42-foot Antares 12 with lacquered wood cabinetry and padded bulkheads. The hull shape is beam forward,

with a wider beam which translates to exceptional interior room. To port is a convertible dinette (this transforms into a 35-inch-wide berth), with a compact galley opposite, and the skipper resides in lordly comfort with a sliding door to the side deck to help with docking and anchoring and facilitates waving jauntily as you depart an anchorage. The dashboard is smallish, but easily handles the optional 12-inch Garmin GPSMAP MFD. My test boat also boasted optional Lenco trim tabs and a Sidepower bow thruster. We also had the 3 kW Fischer Panda genset tucked under the cockpit to power the air conditioning (check yes on both).

The galley may not handle beef bourguignon, but the two-burner Kenyon cooktop, 80-liter undercounter Dometic refrigerator, and optional microwave (yes!) easily handle family meals.

The Antares cabin is offset to port, another Beneteau innovation, providing a safe and wide walkway from cockpit to the bow sun pad on the starboard side, with faux teak that grips well even wet. This means the port deck is, um, tiny, so it's really for holding cleats or leaning against when standing on a dock.

We cruised this boat's little sister. Get the full story at boatingmag.com/pocketcruiser.

Not only is the Antares 9 a great day boat, but it's a two-cabin weekender. My yardstick for weekending is if She Who Must Be Obeyed would spend a couple of nights aboard and, since the Antares 9 sports a full queen berth forward (impressive for a 30-footer), no problem. Yes, the head is wet, meaning the compartment becomes the shower, but I'll forsake a shower stall in a hot second for a big comfy bed. And I liked the vessel sink and Euro-style faucet/spray. (And so will She.)

The second cabin, which is also privatized by a door, offers an athwartship, full-size berth with ample headroom (6 feet, 1 inch) to pull on your pants and a hanging locker to stash them at night.

Offshore, the Antares 9 doesn't disappoint and, even at speed in a lumpy Gulf Stream, Aunt Edna won't be alarmed. The thin windshield mullions provided me with an unhindered view, and the manual sunroof adds some breeze without the complication or expense of wire and switching. The new Airstep hull, with twin strakes and 23 degrees of transom deadrise—yes, this is a deep-V cruiser—proved a delight to run, as deep-V hulls track great, even at low speeds, and ride great, even at planing speeds. This proved true during my test whether I headed the Antares 9 into the waves or ran down sea. The sharpish bow neatly sliced the swells, the lifting strakes threw the spray aside, and the resulting ride was a pleasant and predictable lope. I did discover that the Antares likes to run slightly bow high in chop (I didn't have big seas), so ignore all the rules and trim the drives up a bit to move the point of entry a bit further aft. With 40-plus degrees of deadrise amidships, I still had a soft ride.

With the hammers down at 5,800 rpm, I was measuring 85 dB(A) at the helm. That's very quiet, especially compared to the noise levels at the helm aboard an open boat, which many Antares 9 buyers are moving up from. This already-quiet sound level dropped to a pleasant conversational 78 dB(A) at 23 mph.

Shopping? Take a look at the Cutwater C288 Coupe ($340,000). The Cutwater offers a V-berth instead of queen, lacks a bow sun pad and offers a smaller cockpit. It is a bit longer and is rated for more power, however.

Cutting to the chase, I loved the Beneteau Antares 9. It can do anything a family wants on the water, from fun fishing to entertaining, it's comfy for weekend adventures, and it's priced right! Take a peek. —*Capt. Chris Caswell*

High Points

- A queen-size berth aboard a 30-footer? Just heaven!
- Price is always a consideration in my household.
- From Groupe Beneteau, a 900-pound gorilla among boatbuilders, since 1884.

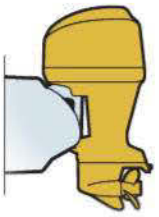
Low Points

- I found the overhead VHF at the helm awkward to use.
- I would have liked the bow thruster joystick mounted outboard of the helm, but that's a personal preference.

• **LOA:** 30'6" • **BEAM:** 9'10" • **DRAFT (MAX):** 3'2" • **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 10,182 lb. • **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 23 degrees • **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 10'9" • **MAX CABIN HEADROOM:** 6'5" • **FUEL CAPACITY:** 158 gal. • **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 500 • **AVAILABLE POWER:** Twin 250 hp Mercury outboards

Price: $224,700
(with test power)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Twin 200 hp Mercury V-6s **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/19"x18" Enertia ECO stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 125 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 10 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 600 lb.

BENETEAU AMERICA
beneteau.com/en-us

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.3	5.0	2.2	2.0	2.3	282.6	325.2	0	65
1500	6.1	7.0	3.5	1.7	2.0	248.7	286.2	1	69
2000	6.5	7.5	5.4	1.2	1.4	172.7	198.8	2	70
2500	11.1	12.8	8.3	1.3	1.5	191.8	220.7	5	75
3000	17.1	19.7	10.2	1.7	1.9	240.2	276.4	4	75
3500	24.0	27.6	16.0	1.5	1.7	214.5	246.8	3	75
4000	27.8	32.0	19.4	1.4	1.6	205.1	236.0	3	78
4500	32.8	37.8	23.3	1.4	1.6	201.7	232.2	2	79
5000	35.7	41.1	30.6	1.2	1.3	167.0	192.2	2	80
5500	39.2	45.1	37.0	1.1	1.2	151.6	174.4	2	82
5686	40.2	46.3	40.2	1.0	1.2	143.2	164.8	2	85

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY BENETEAU AMERICA

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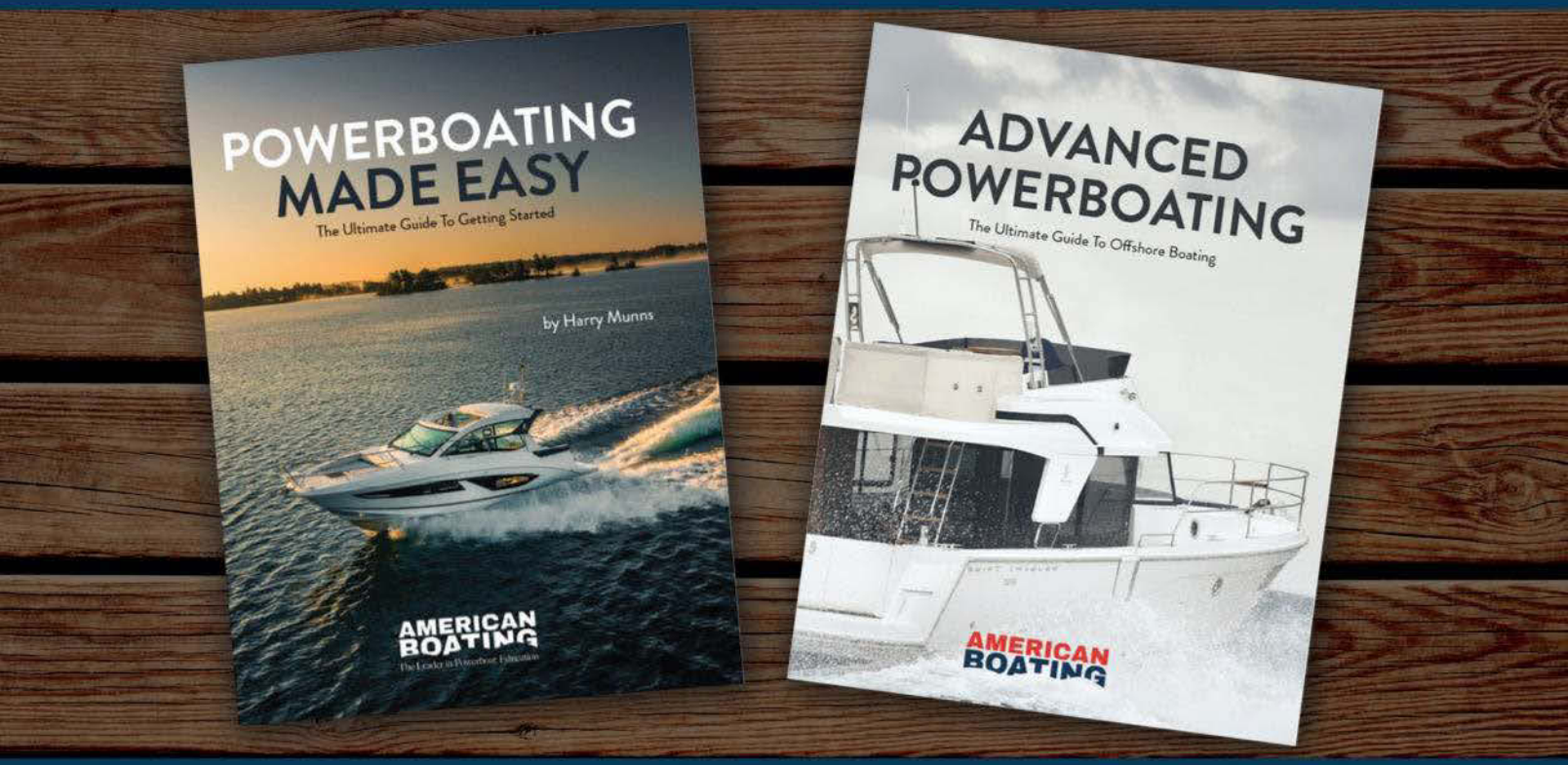

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BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3467

BAY RIDER 269 BAY

A feature-laden, high-performing hybrid bay boat that also offers several family amenities.

PHOTO: COURTESY BAY RIDER BOATS

You're shopping for a boat that gets the job done, offers a high degree of reliability, durability, fishability and comes with a price that doesn't rival the cost of a house, a fast-food franchise or four years at a top-rated college. It's a type rarely seen today, as the new-boat market seems to be one of extremes. Lower-priced boats that a few serious anglers seem to want occupy on one end. At the other end are luxuriously equipped boats, which while also usually offering excellent engineering and a top-rate build, design and ride, cause many anglers to wince at the price.

After inspecting Bay Rider Boats' Wilson, North Carolina, factory, and spending the day aboard its new hybrid the 269 Bay, powered by a Yamaha 450 XTO, I became certain of two

SCAN ME

To see a photo gallery of the Bay Rider 269 Bay scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3467.

PHOTOS: COURTESY BAY RIDER BOATS

things. First, there's good reason for Bay Rider's (formerly KenCraft Boats) 50-year history. Second, here is a boatbuilder that hasn't abandoned the middle-ground boat-buying angler. Bay Rider builds a top-quality 27-foot hybrid you can call yours—well-equipped—for a price less than $200,000.

There's nothing wrong with faux-granite rigging stations, varnished teak trim around the helm and a vessel sink in the head of a fishing boat. Such items do add-up to real money, however. I saw no such accouterments aboard the 269 Bay.

Instead, I discovered right away that this boat's builders, the father and son team of Bob and Robert Brunson, prioritized delivering to anglers what they need in a hybrid bay boat.

Case in point? The 269 Bay offers the low 22-inch freeboard aft and shallow draft required of a hybrid bay boat, unlike most others in this category, the Bay Rider is a truly self-bailing design. It drains by gravity, while at rest. No pumps required. That means more safety when you take the boat offshore, less worry when the boat's moored during torrential rain, and more

convenience when washing the boat down in the water. (Frankly, if, unlike the 269 Bay, a fishing boat isn't self-bailing, I am hesitant to recommend you take it offshore.) The gunwale rod holders drain to the self-bailing deck, not the bilge—another thing to look for when shopping.

Other rigging and build points I applauded include the use of knee braces to connect stringers to the Bay Rider's massive, 4-inch thick transom. Overkill? Don't let anyone tell you that. These boats run high-horsepower outboards set back from the transom on jack plates. How many waves will it encounter during a day, a season or during the course of ownership? In addition, hull and deck are bonded using methacrylate adhesive, which indicates a good fitting joint, and one not subject to leaks. Pipework is schedule 80, which is thicker than the more common schedule 40, hatch lids are finished on both sides and hatch openings feature deep gutters to keep out water. The helm features an ingeniously beautiful, serviceable twin 12-inch Garmin MFD installation that looks sharp and helps thwart thieves as well. Garmin digital switching, keyless engine starting and a wireless phone charger are other standards found at the helm.

Bay Rider's integral stringer system helps ensure longevity. Learn more by viewing our video at boatingmag.com/bayrider.

Service access is another characteristic I key on when buying a boat. If I'm doing the maintenance or repair, good access saves me time. If I'm hiring the work done, good service access saves me money. Aboard the 269 Bay, bilge access proved wide-open via a large hatch in the aft cockpit. I easily placed my hands upon pumps and fittings. Inside the console, access to batteries and helm electrics and electronics proved equally easy.

Underway, I can say that the Bay Rider 269 Bay takes off like a shot. When I put the throttle in the corner, the boat was planing in 5.8 seconds and rushed from zero to 30 mph in 7 seconds. These numbers resulted from our test procedure averaging three runs on calm water with full fuel and three people aboard. Set back 6 inches on its jack plate, the big Yamaha propelled us to a thrilling—but not nerve-racking—61 mph (the performance chart shows a two-way average). Besides handling and speed, the jack plate also allows taking advantage of every inch of the 269 Bay's shallow 17-inch draft (16 inches with a 350 hp engine). Test day didn't offer up wind or waves, but high-speed wake jumping proved the solid build. On impact, the boat doesn't shimmy or shudder and the top doesn't visibly wrack and vibrate. According to Bay Rider, the boat achieves similar performance with twin 200 hp Yamahas.

Fishing features? The 269 Bay comes standard with a 50-gallon bow livewell and a 22-gallon well in the transom, plus, you can order another 50-gallon well in the leaning post. Two anglers can work the bow deck where an extended console lounge and removeable backrests also are found. I measured the aft cockpit at a generous 7-by-5-feet abaft the leaning post. In-sole fish boxes are 8-feet long, insulated and stash four rods apiece. The standard hardtop offers rocket launchers, a bow sunshade and spreader lights. The 269 Bay is rigged to fish with more than I can list.

Shoppers considering the 269 Bay should also look at the Sportsman 267 offered on its website, like the Bay Rider, for an internet starting base price (sans freight and prep) of $191,190 with an F300 Yamaha. The Sportsman is also available with Mercury power, but not shown with twin engines, as is the Bay Rider.

This 269 Bay impressed me for its inherent seaworthiness, fishability, rock-solid build, performance, and family features. If you're in the market for such a boat, schedule a sea trial soon, before Bay Rider decides that it can sell this boat for more than its current offer. *—Kevin Falvey*

High Points

- Bow deck offers plenty of fishing room while accommodating movement around the boat and seating for non-angling crew or family days.
- Self-bailing design makes it truly stand out in this class of boat.
- Enclosed head, jump seats and removable backrests enable family day comforts.
- Formidably fishable, thoughtfully designed, ruggedly built.

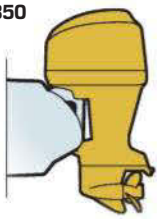
Low Points

- The hardest of hard-core hybrid bay boat buyers might decry the fact that the entire bow isn't decked over.
- Battery terminals were not covered per ABYC. Check before taking delivery.

• **LOA:** 26'3" • **BEAM:** 9'3" • **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'4"
• **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 4,200 (no engine)
• **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 16 degrees • **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 7'9" • **MAX. CABIN HEADROOM:** 6'9"
• **FUEL CAPACITY:** 103 gal. • **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 450
• **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single or twin Yamaha outboards

Price: $158,095
(base with Yamaha F350 and no freight, prep)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Single 450 hp Yamaha F450 XTO Offshore outboard **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/16⅜" x 21" **GEAR RATIO:**1.79:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 100 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 600 lb.

BAY RIDER BOATS
Wilson, North Carolina; bayriderboats.com

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.9	5.6	1.8	2.7	3.1	250.6	288.4	0	69
1500	6.8	7.9	3.3	2.1	2.4	191.6	220.5	2	74
2000	8.0	9.2	5.0	1.6	1.8	148.2	170.6	5	79
2500	10.8	12.4	8.7	1.2	1.4	114.8	132.1	7	85
3000	22.7	26.1	10.8	2.1	2.4	194.7	224.0	4	88
3500	28.3	32.6	11.7	2.4	2.8	224.4	258.3	3	89
4000	33.4	38.4	15.5	2.2	2.5	199.6	229.7	3	90
4500	37.9	43.6	21.0	1.8	2.1	167.2	192.5	2	91
5000	42.1	48.5	27.6	1.5	1.8	141.6	162.9	2	91
5500	46.9	54.0	34.8	1.3	1.6	125.0	143.8	1	92
6000	52.3	60.2	38.5	1.4	1.6	125.9	144.8	1	93

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY BAY RIDER BOATS

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Calling all *Boating* readers! Your opinion counts. Take our 2025 Audience Survey and help shape the future of our magazine. Plus, you'll be entered to win a Visa gift card! Scan the QR Code to enter now.

SCAN ME

To see an online photo gallery of the Pathfinder 2300 HPS, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3468.

A mechanic would never use a wrench as a hammer, so if you are primarily an inshore angler, why would you want a boat that is also designed to go offshore if it came at the expense of being less efficient for its primary mission? One of the hottest trends is hybrid, multipurpose boats, and they make sense for those who split their time equally between fishing inshore and offshore. But if going skinny in pursuit of fish is your passion, a boat like the Pathfinder 2300 HPS is the right tool for the job. Sure, flats boats can go shallower, but they can't carry five anglers and handle large inshore waters in style and comfort when the wind kicks up. On those balmy days, it can go past marker No. 1 to head offshore when handled responsibly by an experienced owner.

PHOTO: COURTESY PATHFINDER BOATS

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3468

PATHFINDER 2300 HPS

The 2300 HPS runs in 15 inches of water and has a top end of 57.8 mph.

PHOTOS: COURTESY PATHFINDER BOATS

Raised casting platforms at both the bow and stern serve as primary fishing zones aboard the 2300 HPS. Unlike most flats boats, there's a raised edge around the perimeter of both platforms that serves as a warning for educated feet. This lets anglers know when they are close to walking the plank. The step up to the bow platform conceals a surprisingly deep locker beneath a sturdy hatch that I'd deem perfect for cast net buckets. My test boat featured an optional 36-volt, 63-inch shaft Garmin Force Kraken trolling motor ($4,897) installed on the bow, and owners can step up to a 60-inch shaft Power-Pole Move trolling motor, which costs $2,143 more and is insanely quiet (I've fished it). A truly serious fishing boat, the 2300 HPS doesn't offer some of the family-friendly niceties such as bowrider seatbacks. Instead, it has lockable rod lockers attached to the main deck that can serve as auxiliary seats if needed. But don't bother looking for other multitask features such as ski-tow bars, cockpit tables or head options because there aren't any. Unlike Pathfinder Hybrid or Open series models that boast interior gunwale heights up to 25 inches, the 2300 HPS's cockpit depth

measures slightly less than 18 inches, which for most adults is just below knee-height. In open ocean swells, this would likely beat up your knees and increase the chances of shipping water or of someone taking an unscheduled dip. But low gunwales such as those aboard the 2300 HPS prove super helpful for those anglers who do a lot of catch-and-release fishing, land fish by hand, or swing their quarry aboard. It's also ideal for those who like to skip-cast into low-lying branches or under docks—places where lunkers often lurk—and it reduces the boat's windage, which makes it easier for the trolling motor to do its job of keeping you in the best position to present a bait or lure to your quarry.

Live-bait anglers will love the Pathfinder 2300 HPS's standard 35-gallon livewell, which I'll note with approval, installed on the boat's centerline for better balance. I'd advise upgrading it with a recirculating pump ($199) which ensures you can keep your baits lively while on the move on the water, on the trailer headed to the launch ramp or find yourself in a dirty-water situation. Owners can add a leaning post livewell ($787) that holds 25 gallons, and for even more capacity, there's a portside compartment located on the rear deck that can be converted to a release well that would also be ideal for holding live crabs, if the hunt for giant reds, black drum, tautog, or permit is on the agenda. Those who prospect for fish by sight will likely opt for the mini tower ($18,932). The tower also affords you an eagle-eye view of the shallows when running. The vantage running from the tower helps avoid rapid, unscheduled stoppages. When fishing inshore, good anglers like to have rods rigged with different setups to be able to take advantage of opportunities as soon as they arise, and Pathfinder makes it easy with four vertical rod holders on both sides of the center console, with three more holders behind the standard leaning post with an Engel cooler underneath. Four more rod holders reside in the gunwales abaft of the center console and owners can add six more by adding a hardtop or fabric T-top.

> HPS stands for High Performance Step, a hull design that improves fuel economy and performance (Yamaha's tests show 63.7 mph at wide-open throttle lightly loaded) and "built-in" running angle.

Undergunwale rod storage features bungee cords that press against the rods to minimize the banging as you run to the hotspot. The helm of Pathfinder's 2300 HPS is compact to maximize fishing space aboard, but there's enough room for a 16-inch MFD. The only dash downer was that the shiny, black dash insert surrounding the 12-inch Garmin chart plotter/fish finder was annoyingly reflective.

Shoppers might compare the Pathfinder to Contender's 24 Bay (advertsied for $125,000 with a Mercury 300 Pro XS). That boat is a bit longer and carries19 gallons more fuel and a 50 hp higher maximum rating. The layouts are similar, with the Contender having a slightly larger foredeck but a smaller aft deck.

Powering my test boat was the Yamaha VMax SHO VF250, which, according to Pathfinder, is the overwhelming choice of owners over the other option, the Yamaha F300 with the integrated Digital Electric Steering (DES). The VF250 is a hot rod of an engine with excellent acceleration that pushed the 2300 HPS on plane in 3.5 seconds and to 30 mph in 6.3 seconds. That's quick. The Yamaha sports a 20-inch shaft, and with the standard Atlas jack plate mounted on the extended transom, it can run the boat in as little as 15 inches of water, which is only 3 inches more than its draft when floating with the motor tilted up. The F300's shortest shaft length is a 25-inch model and is $12,126 more expensive, which might explain the popularity of the 250 VMax SHO. *—Alan Jones*

High Points

- Vacuum Assisted Resin Infusion System (VARIS) creates a strong yet light hull.
- The batteries and wiring harness inside the console are cleanly installed, properly secured and easily accessed.
- Hands off! Friction hinges grace all the hatch lids while gutters channel water away from gear stowed within the lockers.

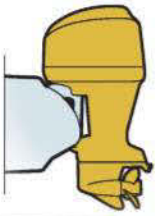
Low Points

- VMax SHO 250's mechanical shift system isn't as smooth as the Digital Electric Control on the available F300.
- A small baitwell on the front deck would prevent anglers in the bow from having to trek to the stern to reload.

• **LOA:** 23'6" • **BEAM:** 8'4" • **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'3" • **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 3,075 lb. • **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 15 degrees • **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 9'0" • **FUEL CAPACITY:** 61 gal. • **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 300 • **AVAILABLE POWER:** Yamaha VF250 or F300

Price: $101,507
(with Yamaha VF250)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Yamaha VMax SHO VF250 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Tempest Plus 23" x 14¼" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:**1.75:1 **FUEL LOAD**: 30 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 550 lb.

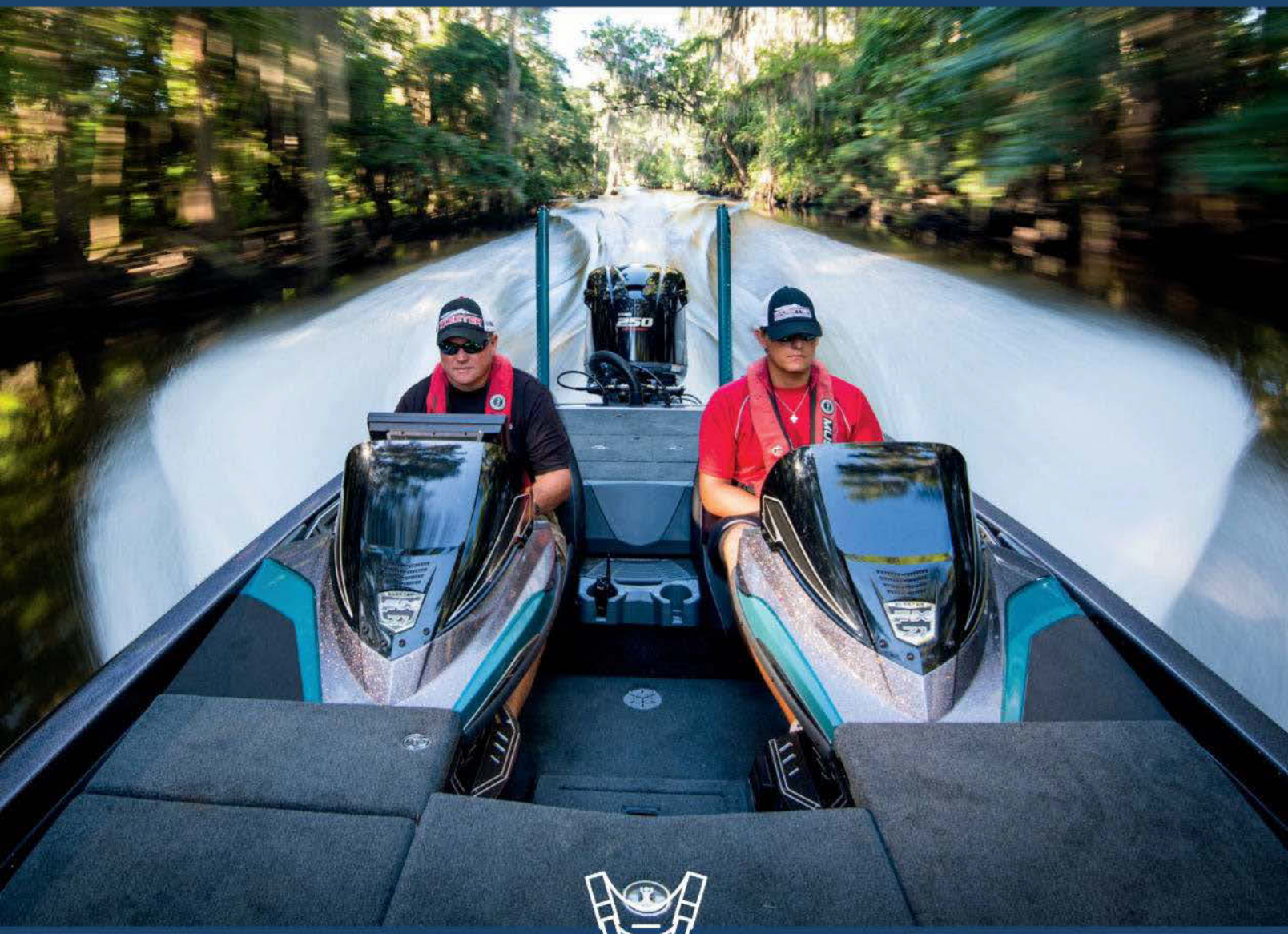
PATHFINDER BOATS
Fort Pierce, Florida; pathfinderboats.com

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.21	0.00	1.40	3.72	4.29	204	235	2	58
1500	7.86	9.05	2.55	3.08	3.55	169	195	3	62
2000	9.04	10.40	4.00	2.26	2.60	124	143	6	66
2500	10.08	11.60	5.90	1.71	1.97	94	108	7	67
3000	13.08	15.05	7.50	1.74	2.01	96	110	5	76
3500	27.81	32.00	9.10	3.06	3.52	168	193	2	83
4000	34.80	40.05	12.10	2.88	3.31	158	182	2	87
4500	40.41	46.50	17.70	2.28	2.63	125	144	2	90
5000	47.06	54.15	22.30	2.11	2.43	116	133	2	92
5500	49.27	56.70	23.60	2.09	2.40	115	132	2	93
5700	50.23	57.80	23.80	2.11	2.43	116	133	2	94

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY PATHFINDER BOATS



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Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

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By Jim Hendricks

McLAREN M300 OUTBOARD

Honda Marine turns to McLaren for a souped-up version of its 250 hp V-6 engine.

Those who follow Can-Am, Formula 1 or IndyCar racing, know the McLaren name. You might even be a fan of McLaren racing team drivers such as Oscar Piastri in F1 or Pato O'Ward in IndyCar.

Yet, the amber glow of Team Papaya (nickname inspired by the orange emblem of McLaren Racing) shines on a number of other motorized enterprises, one of the latest being Honda Marine outboard engines.

More specifically, Honda Marine has formed an alliance with New Jersey-based McLaren Engineering to produce the McLaren Performance M300 based on Honda's BF250 3.6-liter V-6. To be clear, McLaren's relationship with Honda is not new. Fact is, McLaren Engineering's parent company, Canada-based Linamar Corp., has been a supplier to American Honda Motor Co., Inc. for 10 years, assisting with high-precision engine component manufacturing. So, this alliance is really more of an expanded partnership.

The collaboration with McLaren Engineering is designed to "fulfill Honda's mission to be a marine mobility leader, offering integrated, high-power solutions for the global marketplace," according to a company statement.

Of special note, the McLaren 300 I tested at the 2025 Miami International Boat Show was based on the previous version of the BF250, since supplanted by the refreshed BF250 with new styling reminiscent of the BF350. The refreshed 250 also has an oxygen sensor and enhancements to the controls and engine displays. Yet

LET'S RACE
The performance-inspired McLaren M300, like select Honda outboards, is available in either white or silver liveries.

PHOTOS: COURTESY HONDA MARINE

the powerhead is essentially the same between the two.

The existing features of the BF250 V-6 fuel-injected platform include Honda VTEC (Variable Valve Timing and Lift Electronic Control), which adjusts the timing, lift, and duration of the engine valves to optimize performance and efficiency across different engine speeds. A dual-channel, indirect-air-circuit induction system has a two-pass cooling system to optimize performance. It has 2-to-1 lower-unit gear ratio. Honda's Intelligent Shift and Throttle plug-and-play system networks with Honda Marine's electronic controls and displays, as well as third-party devices. A mechanically controlled version of the 250 is also available.

How does the M300 differ from the 250? McLaren performance modifications include the integration of a new camshaft for enhanced valve timing and high lift; a new Engine Control Unit that boosts efficiencies (ignition mapping, knock control); and new fuel injectors for higher fuel supply and improved efficiency.

The result is a performance-inspired V-6 outboard engine with an improved horsepower-to-weight ratio that offers top-end power for boats 24 feet in length overall and higher, including pontoons and fiberglass boats, for inland and coastal fishing and pleasure boating, according to McLaren Engineering. This motor also fills an obvious gap in Honda's outboard lineup between the BF250 and BF350.

However, the M300 will not be available for repowering existing boats. Instead, the new agreement enables McLaren Engineering to supply the outboard to selected Honda-affiliated boatbuilders to provide a greater range of horsepower choices in 20-, 25- and 30-inch shaft lengths.

So, how does the M300 perform? My test platform was an FCJ 263 HS Fishing Guide Edition. FCJ Boats is based in Bacliff, Texas, and builds lightweight rolled-edge-fiberglass center-console skiffs for fishing the shallow inshore waters of the Lone Star State.

With 75 gallons of fuel, three crew members (including me) on board and turning a 17-inch-pitch Honda three-blade stainless-steel propeller, the 622-pound M300 vaulted the 26-foot-3-inch FCJ from 0 mph to plane in 4 seconds and reached 30 mph in 8 seconds. I recorded a top speed of 45.6 mph at 6,400 rpm in the waters of Florida's Biscayne Bay. I also recorded a sound level of 85 dB(a) at 3,500 rpm and 95 dB(a) at wide-open throttle. Interestingly, the base BF250 is rated for 6,300 rpm, but the McLaren is rated to rev a bit higher, as you might expect of this souped-up version.

In subsequent testing in the waters of Galveston Bay, Texas, by FCJ Boats with 83 gallons of fuel, six crew with a 19-inch-pitch three-blade stainless-steel prop, the 4,020-pound boat achieved a comparable top speed of 45.3 mph at 6,400 rpm. The M300 posted its most economical cruising speed at 3,500 rpm, where the FCJ loped along at 20.2 mph, burning 7.7 gph for 2.8 mpg.

Potential buyers of the M300 will ask about the warranty, as well as service after the sale. The McLaren carries the same non-transferable warranty as Honda outboards—a 5-year non-declining limited warranty against defects in material or workmanship for recreational use. But the M300 is not eligible for the optional HondaCare 36 months of additional protection. Parts and service for the M300 are available through Honda Marine's national dealer network. To learn more, visit marine.honda.com/outboards/models/highpower/m300.

PHOTOS: COURTESY HONDA MARINE

It's Fishing

It's traditionally the most giving time of year. For that reason, and because most boaters are just plain gear heads, each holiday season we present one of our most popular features: *Boating*'s Holiday Gift Guide.

This year's collection is a categorized list of the best boating gifts curated by the world's foremost powerboat experts, the editors at *Boating*. On these pages you'll find great ideas whether the boater on your list is a DIYer, wakeboarder or angler. Looking for sunglasses, marine electronics, or something boaty to read? You'll find items that fill in those blanks here as well. You'll even find a free item or two. Many of the gifts presented have been personally tested by us aboard our own boats.

While you shop for friends, family and fellow boaters, don't forget to shop for yourself—er, we mean for your boat. It probably needs something!

TOADFISH STOWAWAY FILLET KNIFE SYSTEM

Titanium-coated, high-carbon stainless-steel blades remain sharp and corrosion resistant even in saltwater environments. Either a 7-inch or 8½-inch version folds into a sturdy, secure gripping handle with a carabiner hook for stowage. A folding cutting board is included. Everything fits in a nylon carry bag to be tucked into the tackle box. $96 (7 inch), $102 (8½ inch); toadfish.com

PLANO WEEKEND TACKLE BACKPACK

A molded bottom holds the bag's shape and keeps water out. The 600 Denier polyester main compartment is sealed with water-resistant zippers as are smaller side pockets for frequently used items. Tool-holding slots in the sides keep pliers and other tools. Top-mounted webbed grab handles for grab-and-go transport accompany padded, adjustable backpack straps for easy hiking transport. From $52.49; planooutdoors.com

PHOTOS: OPTICALDESIGN / ADOBE STOCK (BOAT WITH SANTA), NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME), COURTESY TOADFISH, COURTESY PLANO

Deck the Hulls!

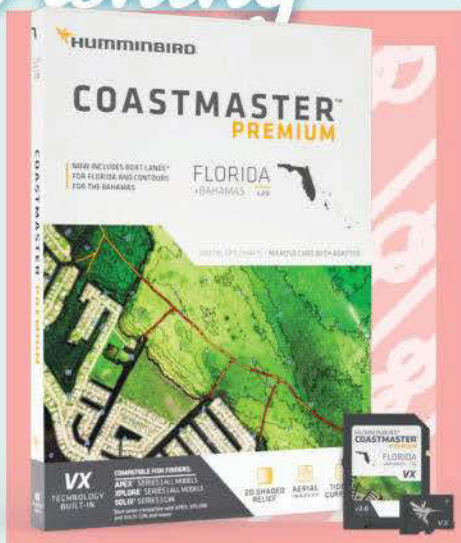
BY THE *BOATING* TECH TEAM

DAIWA SALTIGA SPINNING REELS

These offshore spinning power houses were the splash at ICAST 2025. Santa's elves had to bring their metallurgy up to speed to pull them off, and Rolex will be crying when this finds itself under the tree instead of a watch. Its one-piece aluminum frame is solid, yet light, and powerful enough to tackle big game from stripers and tarpon to marlin. The Powerdrive rotor is balanced and smooth, easing line recovery, while layering it on evenly. The bail is hollow for strength, and minimizes flex, for reliable retrieve. The line roller system is tough and oversized to minimize friction and fend off braided line abrasion. Top it all off with its DRD roller drag system—the bearings are pressed between metal plates, and main drive bearings are sealed from salt by liquid magnetic plates. This is a bulletproof piece of big-game artillery. $1,099.99 to $1,199.99; tackledirect.com

PHOTOS: AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (SNOW GLOBE WITH WATER), COURTESY DAIWA

Fishing



HUMMINBIRD COASTMASTER FLORIDA PREMIUM ELECTRONIC CHARTS

Florida's intricate backwaters shallow flats, and coastal waterways, are all displayed in amazingly detailed imagery. Verified boat lanes, and high-definition shaded relief, ensure complete situational awareness for enhanced fishing and safer navigation. Chart cards are available for regions you fish and, after we saw Florida on our Apex, we can attest to their value. $599.99; humminbird.johnsonoutdoors.com

OPINEL NO. 8 STAINLESS-STEEL KNIFE

There is a simple elegance to Opinel cutlery that comes from decades of tradition among French outdoorsmen. This is one of its first synthetic handles and includes an integrated 100 dB emergency whistle, providing an alternate to a horn. The Swedish stainless-steel blade is forged to hold an edge, stand up to hard work and hone to a sharp edge. Half is serrated for cutting tough dock lines, the other half is sharp and straight for fine work, and it securely locks open or closed. $41; opinel-usa.com

SAVAGE GEAR REVMAG WALKER

The "mag" could stand for magnum but it is short for the magnet inside this jewel. It is designed to slide toward the lure's tail upon casting for maximum range. it slides forward on retrieve to create fish-fooling dog-walking action. Ten color options can decorate your Christmas tree or mesmerize fish, and its dual treble hooks have an anti-rust coating. They come in 3.75-inch (½ ounce) and 4.75- inch (7/8 ounce) models. One of our most affordable—and appreciated--- gifts. $17.99 to $18.99; savagegear.com

BERKLEY GULP TURBO SHRIMP

Gulp baits are as good as food. Fish see it, they smell it, they bite it, and they don't spit it out. The turbo shrimp has tantalizing appendages to add action to its fluttering segmented body and the action serves to spread the bait's scent in the water where fish can sniff it up. It comes in ten colors and 3-, 4- and 5-inch lengths in six-, four- and four-count packs, respectively. Thread it onto your favorite jig head and start stalking big saltwater gamefish in grass flats, oyster beds or mangrove roots. From $4.69; amazon.com

PENN CARNAGE III BOAT SPINNING RODS

Word has it that Santa stopped to jig fish during some transoceanic flights (wouldn't you?) and used Penn's Carnage III rods to get the job done. Carnage III rods feature powerful, lightweight blanks that are also extremely durable. Penn's proprietary SLS3 blank construction provides a very thin diameter blank, while maintaining a lightweight feel, which is ideal for heavier boat, jig, surf, and nearshore models. Spec'd with high-end components such as Fuji K-Guides, Sea-Guide and Fuji reel seats, and hypalon/rubber shrink-tube handles, this rod will be anglers' next go-to workhorse. Look for our review at boatingmag.com/penncarnage. $259 to $559; pennfishing.com

NEBO RUDOLPH RED LIGHTS

If you need a light in a boat or when fishing, make it a red one—like Santa's reindeer, Rudolph—so it won't steal your night vision. The Tempest 500 Nebo swings both ways, toggling from a 120-degree white lantern to a 360-degree white lantern to a 360-degree red lantern to a blinding 500-lumen output spotlight with a 90-yard range. It's IPX7 waterproof with a rechargeable lithium battery that will illuminate it for up to 96 hours in its lower-light Eco mode. It comes with a wrist lanyard, a foldaway hanging hook and it stands on its own on any flat surface. It's just 5.25 inches long and weighs about 5 ounces. $34.99; nebo.acgbrands.com

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME). COURTESY HUMMINBIRD. COURTESY OPINEL USA INC. COURTESY SAVAGE GEAR. COURTESY BERKLEY. COURTESY NEBO (2). COURTESY PENN FISHING (2)

Fishing

SITKA ROVER GTX BOOT

Perfect for a rainy day of fishing, these easy-to-slip-on boots have an elastic rim with webbed straps to assist in slipping them on. Kick them off at the door to avoid muddy floors—they'll go back on just as easily. The lugged soles are designed for gripping mud, gravel or slick decks without picking up rocks in crevasses. They are waterproof, thanks to a Goretex bootie inside and a fabric upper. The suburban boots will go well on the dock or at the grocery or hardware store. At a modest price, they make an affordably cozy Christmas gift from a top-shelf premium outdoor brand. $149; sitkagear.com

Safety

ACR DRY BAG

This dry bag from ACR's waterproof construction lends it to protecting flares, first-aid supplies and you name it. Take it with you when wading ashore at the beach or sandbar. It floats, so you can feel confident in its protection. Word on the docks is that Santa was so impressed with its design and construction that he custom-ordered one in red! Other available colors are black and white (sorry, Mr. Claus). It measures 7½- by-14¾ inches. $29.95; acrartex.com

NOAA US CHART NO. 1

Not a nautical chart at all, the US Chart No.1 is an invaluable aid for boaters. It's a 130-page book available as a free PDF download from NOAA's website. Within its pages the boater on your holiday gift list will find the symbols, abbreviations and definitions of all of the elements that make up a nautical chart. With it, things such as the composition of the seabed, the legality of anchoring or the preferred entrance to a harbor can be determined with greater certainty. A must-have for serious boaters. Free; nauticalcharts.noaa.gov

KAWASAKI JET SKI IGNITE LIFE VEST

Approved by the US Coast Guard, the Kawasaki Jet Ski Ignite Life Vest is said to be the same one worn by Santa's elves. (Good skaters those elves, but swimming isn't their forte.) It features expansion panels, YKK zipper and dual webbed belts with quick-release buckles. This attractive neoprene life vest comes in three dual sizes: small (XS-S); large (M-LG) and 2X (XL-2X). It's available in blue, red, grey and green, $79.16; kawasaki.com

HYPERLITE DOMAIN LIFE VEST

Hyperlite's Domain Vest carries both US Coast Guard and Transport Canada approval as a "life-saving device." The choice of the Hyperlite Team, its comfort and mobility come from specially designed segmented foam panels and super-secure belt loops. Neoprene materials repel water and bolster drainability keeping the Domain lightweight, while looking sweet with Hyperlite's slick graphics. $155; hyperlite.com

MUSTANG ELITE 190 INFLATABLE LIFE JACKET

Give the gift of survival at sea. This new inflatable life jacket from Mustang features the Hammar Hydrostatic Inflatable Technology that is compatible with AIS or a PLB to add an extra layer of protection to signal help or locate you in an emergency. Lightweight and nonrestrictive, it's easy to wear at all times on the water, whether cruising near land or far outside the inlet. $324.99; mustangsurvival.com

ACR RAPIDDITCH BAG

A ditch bag is what you grab stepping off a sinking or burning boat and into the liferaft or the water. It needs to contain what you need to call for help and survive until that help arrives. We haven't tested the ACR RapidDitch Bag, but one has been in use aboard Editor-in-Chief, Kevin Falvey's boat, for over a decade. The RapidDitch Bag floats, offers rugged Velcro closure, features a long strap that can be used to tether survivors together or secure the bag to a life vest. It has a dedicated EPIRB pocket. The bag is bright yellow and reflective. Fill it with safety and survival gear for the ultimate boating safety gift. $129.99; acrartex.com

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME), COURTESY SITKA GEAR, COURTESY NOAA (2), COURTESY ACR ELECTRONICS (2), COURTESY MUSTANG SURVIVAL, COURTESY HYPERLITE, COURTESY KAWASAKI

Electronics

FUSION APOLLO RA800 MARINE STEREO

You will love listening to holiday tunes with the new Apollo RA800 marine stereo from Fusion, a Garmin brand. It delivers high-resolution audio and Wi-Fi connectivity for outstanding performance and seamless streaming. With a processor that's eight times faster than the previous generation, the RA800 features an internal amplifier with 50 percent more power. It drives up to four speakers. The tuner supports the latest DAB and DAB+ broadcasts, allowing for high-quality digital radio streaming, and the improved Wi-Fi connectivity for Apple AirPlay for a high-fidelity listening experience. $999.99; garmin.com/marine/audio

SCANSTRUT ULTRA PHONE CHARGER

Everyone carries a mobile phone, so Scanstrut's Ultra marine-grade wireless phone charger makes a great stocking stuffer for a boater. It's engineered for compatibility with Apple MagSafe phone cases, and features an IPX6 waterproof rating on both the front and back. Powered by a waterproof 12/24-volt wireless charging system, Ultra keeps smartphones fully powered and always within reach. Its strong magnetic grip ensures devices remain securely in place in rough sea conditions. $99.99; thegpsstore.com

KODEN SIRIUS 12 ELECTRO-STABILIZED BINOCULARS

Koden's Sirius 12 binocular features electronic stabilization, a compact size and an affordable price. These lightweight yet rugged binoculars are manufactured in Japan using quality optics and internal components. With a 57.6-degree field of view, 12x magnification, and IPX7-waterproofing, Sirius 12 features a built-in six-axis electronic gyro-sensor to isolate the binocs from the rocking and rolling motion of the boat. One AA alkaline battery provides 12 hours of operation. $699.95; thegpsstore

ROAMSAT SELF-CONTAINED STARLINK SATELLITE ANTENNA CASE

The RoamSat makes a great gift for boaters who are planning to get Starlink satellite service. RoamSat houses the Starlink satellite receiver in a weather-resistant CNC-machined polyethylene box with internal LiFePO4 battery power that provides up to 10 hours of service on a single charge. Four vacuum-suction feet allow boaters to secure the unit to a hardtop or other flat, smooth horizontal surface. You don't need to drill any holes for installation or run cables or wires to the unit. $2,695 without a dish or Starlink service plan; roamsat.com

HUMMINBIRD XPLORE 7

The Xplore 7 is Humminbird's latest multifunction display, and it's built ready to take the boater on your list anywhere. It comes in 9-, 10- and 12-inch-diagonal displays with the brightest output available—we can see ours in detail mounted on the casting deck while standing in the bright sunlight. It comes with Mega side- and down-imaging and dual chirp sonar transducer, and is live-sonar ready. It comes with Humminbird's detailed base map showing underwater terrain, nav markers, marinas and more. It's also compatible with Coastmaster Premium chart cards that provide astonishing underwater detail. Santa likes the 9-inch, and it's offered at just $1,499.99; humminbird.johnsonoutdoors.com

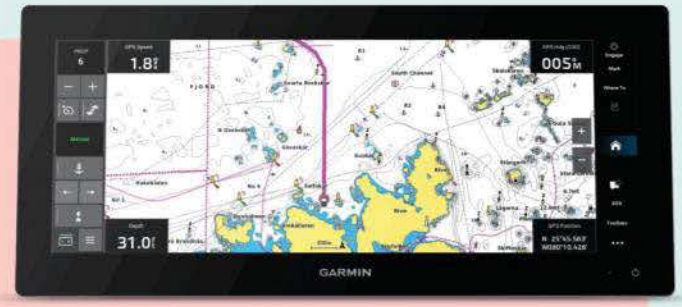
LOWRANCE RECON TROLLING MOTOR

If the boater on your list likes to fish in salt water, a Recon trolling motor may be the best gift ever! This bow-mounted, electric-steer brushless trolling motor represents the first trolling motor from Lowrance engineered for ocean fishing. It features GPS guidance, marine-grade construction and advanced system integration. It operates on either 24 or 36 volts, producing 90 and 115 pounds of thrust, respectively, and uses a unique joystick remote called Freesteer. Incorporating a color LCD display, the remote is lightweight and wearable, providing 360 degrees of manual steering, as well as activation of automatic functions. See our overview video at youtube.com/watch?v=0F3Wh43rHjg. It's available in 54-, 60-, and 72-inch shaft lengths, pricing starts at $3,499; lowrance.com

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTAICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME), COURTESY FUSION. COURTESY ROAMSAT. COURTESY LOWRANCE. COURTESY HUMMINBIRD. COURTESY SI-TEX. COURTESY SCANSTRUT

Electronics

GARMIN 15X3 ULTRAWIDE SCREEN MFD



If you know a boater looking to replace their MFD, Garmin's Ultrawide GPSMap 15x3 may be the perfect gift. With a 15-inch (diagonal) high-resolution touchscreen display, it features an edge-to-edge glass format that's13⅝ inches wide by 7¹¹⁄₁₆ inches tall with 1,920 horizontal pixels and 720 vertical pixels. The ultrawide aspect ratio means that boaters can enjoy the equivalent of dual screens without needing two separate units. It features built-in sonar systems, including ultra-high-definition ClearVu and SideVu scanning sonars with high-contrast color palettes to help better distinguish fish from structure. The unit also supports optional LiveScope live sonar and chirp traditional sonar, and much more. $4,499.99; garmin.com/marine

SHAKESPEARE VHF RADIO TESTER

Any boater on your list will covet this compact, battery-powered Shakespeare ART-3 meter, which connects inline between the radio and the antenna to test the voltage standing wave ratio (VSWR) of an antenna/cable/coupler, radio output power (in watts), and the VHF receiver function. It ensures the VHF is working before you head out—no need for radio checks. To connect the ART-3 between the radio and antenna coupler, you will need Shakespeare's No. 4079 pre-assembled 3-foot cable with PL-259 couplers on each end ($17.41; amazon.com). Read our test report at boatingmag.com/we-test-art-3-vhf-meter. The ART-3 itself is $129.95; thegpsstore.com

SPOT X SATELLITE MESSENGER

If the boater on your list cruises outside cellphone range at times, the Spot X satellite messenger could be the ideal holiday gift. Weighing just 7 ounces, it offers two-way messaging, GPS location tracking, emergency SOS alerts, map-sharing, and much more via the Globalstar satellite network. Boasting Bluetooth wireless technology, it turns a mobile phone into a satellite texting device. The compact Spot X is also IP67-waterproof, an important factor aboard a boat. Recipients can return your text without needing a Spot X themselves. Check out our test report at boatingmag.com/we-test-spot-x. $288.38; outfittersatellite.com, plus $11.95 per month for basic service at myaccount.findmespot.com

SCOTTY SEEKER PROBE

Here's a gift that downrigger anglers will love. Scotty has partnered with Airmar Technology to develop the Seeker Probe for downrigger fishing. It reports depth, speed and water temperature, transmitting data in real time to the boat for display via the Seeker App on a Garmin, Lowrance or Simrad MFD, as well as on a mobile device. The collaboration between Scotty and Airmar uses underwater acoustics to transmit data from the downrigger ball. The kit includes a probe, charging dock and communication hub. $1,475; hodgesmarine.com

SIMRAD NSS 4

Watch for the glee when the boater on your list opens this present—the NSS 4 series from Simrad. Designed for cruisers and offshore sportfishing boats, it is available in 10-, 12- and 16-inch screen sizes. The NSS 4 features a new Qualcomm 8-core processor that enables smoother page transition, as well as lightning-quick auto-routing. An updated glass-to-edge design delivers a more premium look. It includes a built-in dual-channel 1kW chirp sonar and support for Active Imaging HD sonar. It's compatible with C-Map's Discover X and Reveal X charts. Starting at $2,599; simrad-yachting.com

STREAMLIGHT BANDIT PRO RECHARGEABLE HEADLAMP

At 180 lumens, it runs 4.5 hours, and on low at 35 lumens, 21 hours. The Christmas gift giver should buy two and keep one because the handsfree rechargeable light is handy for knot tying or finding that stray sinker that just rolled under the gunwale. It's available in black or yellow head straps and weighs just 1.6 ounces so you'll forget you have it on whether wearing it with the head band or ball cap clip. $31.65; amazon.com

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME),COURTESY GARMIN, COURTESY SPOT, COURTESY SIMRAD, COURTESY SCOTTY FISHING AND OUTDOOR PRODUCTS, COURTESY STREAMLIGHT, INC., COURTESY SHAKESPEARE MARINE

Watersports

PRISTINE BODY SPRAY

You rode for hours and then hit the sandbar. Now, it's time to hit a waterfront spot for dinner. Freshen-up with Pristine Body Spray. When a shower isn't available, this convenient spray works great to remove sweat, grime and salt. Unlike packaged wipes, it's more environmentally friendly. Just spray it on, then wipe it off with a towel and feel clean and refreshed. *Boating*'s editors are currently testing Pristine Body Spray. A great stocking stuffer! $24.95 per 8-ounce bottle; pristinesprays.com

O'BRIEN PONTOON SLIDE

Few other boats offer the sandbar and anchorage capability per foot of a pontoon or tritoon. With the O'Brien Pontoon Slide, owners of those boats can add a new level of fun and family bonding. It's made from commercial-grade reinforced PVC material for years of trouble-free service. Molded handles and welded footsteps offer convenient, worry-free climbing. The slide includes heavy-duty anchor straps, sized to fit most pontoon boats. It has a 200-pound weight capacity. Yule love it. $279.99; obrien.com

HO OMNI SKIS

This holiday season give the one ski that does it all: HO Sports Omni. The Omni's wide platform makes it great behind any watercraft on virtually any waterway, offering easy deep-water starts, smooth turns, stable wake crossings, and endless fun. Its modernized rocker line with dual flat spots provide easy balance, more stability and more forgiveness. The true crossover shape of the Omni combines aggressive, high-performance course skiing with the efficiency necessary for open-water carving. $585; hosports.com

FLITE JET C EFOIL SYSTEM

Jet foiling! Flite's Jet2 Technology soars as quietly and as powerfully as eight reindeer. The 31.5-inch-long mast is machined from aero-grade aluminum and uses a low-drag conical wing interface for all-around performance at a more accessible price. The longer mast allows the foil rider on your gift list to effortlessly transfer from edge to edge via deep carving turns in flat water or surf. Color choices are black or white. Wings, board, and controller are not included. $4,655; fliteboard.com

O'BRIEN HELI 3 TOWABLE TUBE

"Wheee!" Give the gift of thrills with the O'Brien Heli 3 Towable Tube. It's no secret that sideways sliding is one of the most squeal-inducing maneuvers when towing a tube. This rugged and colorful towable is specially designed with speed risers on the underside to facilitate sliding. It comes with a quick-connect tow hook, one lightning valve and four ECO valves. The ultra-grip handles feature knuckle guards. Fa-la-la-la-la-low the link to fun! $349/$429 (2-person/3-person); obrien.com

FATSAC MEGA FILL WEIGHT V2.0

Not a fat man with a sack—it's a FatSac! Featuring a new, larger, 4-inch-diameter fill hole, this ballast weight measures 11 inches wide by 14 inches long by 9.5 inches high. Filled with water, the FatSac Mega Fill Weight v2.0 adds 50 pounds of wave- and wake-making ballast to a boat. Two rugged handles facilitate easy grabbing and moving. Fill the FatSac with any material. Water, rocks, sand, and metal slugs can all be used. Tweak your wake, shape your wave and ho-ho-hold on for watersports thrills! $108.99; fatsac.com

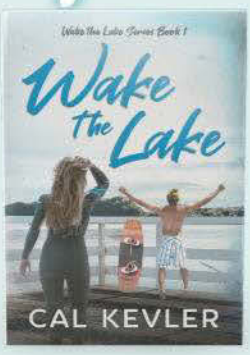
PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN) AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME); COURTESY PRISTINE SPRAYS; COURTESY O'BRIEN (SLIDE AND TUBE); COURTESY HO SPORTS; COURTESY FATSAC; COURTESY FLITEBOARD

Watersports

CONNELLY SIDEWINDER NEO VEST

The Sidewinder Neo features an ergonomic side-entry zip and four-way-stretch neoprene material for maximum comfort and flexibility. The uniform chest panels require less foam, resulting in a thinner profile without sacrificing safety. With no straps or buckles to hinder rider movement, the Neo allows for complete freedom of motion. The dimpled chest panel provides impact protection and a soft texture, while the Glideskin rear panel wicks away excess water. This is a competition-style vest and is not USCG approved. $129.99; connellyskis.com

WAKE THE LAKE



Author Cal Kevler's *Wake the Lake* follows 15-year-old Hudson Holloway, a wakeboarding prodigy who dominates on the water but struggles with anxiety. Haunted by her mother's tragic accident, she pours her all into perfecting impossible tricks. A breakout win launches her into the elite scene, where pressure and self-doubt converge. This 234-page story blends heart-pounding action with themes of resilience and dreaming big—perfect for readers aged 14 to 18 and beyond. $3.99 (kindle), $10.49 (paperback), $24.99 (hardcover); amazon.com

Gear/Apparel

BAJIO GREENLAND GLASSES

These new large-size frames from Bajio make a great gift for the stylish boater in the family. With the choice of polycarbonate or glass polarized lenses, they are designed for technical fishing but keep your eyes safe and your vision clear whenever you step outside. The leases come in seven different color choices depending on the type of water you frequent, and the frames come in grass matte, black matte or brown water matte. $219 for polycarbonate lenses, $269 for glass; bajiosunglasses.com

SPERRY MOC STRIPE SNEAKER

Sperry is as synonymous with boat shoes as Kleenex is with tissues. Give the gift of comfortable boat shoes in the latest evolution beyond the iconic Top Siders.These fashionable lace-ups are made for boating duty, with synthetic material made to resemble shoe leather. The non-marking sole features Wave-Spring technology to sipe away water for enhanced traction. The stylish shoes work well with a bathing suit or business suit. $55; sperry.com

SIMMS GRATEFUL DEAD SOLARTECH HOODIE

If the boater in your family is also a Dead Head, this gift will make them smile, smile, smile. This hoodie from Simms features the band's Steal Your Face logo as well as the associated lightning bolt pattern. The quick-drying, odor-resistant hoodie has a 30-UPF rating, so any boater can keep on trucking all day in the sun. $69.95; simmsfishing.com

HUK AIRWEIGHT QUARTER ZIP

This new lightweight, breathable pullover keeps you protected from the sun and a little chill at the same time. It's made of an ultra-light polyester and spandex blend so it's really comfortable and won't restrict your movement around the boat. It has a UPF-40 sun-protection rating and its moisture-wicking and anti-microbial properties ensure you won't end the day sweaty and smelly. Moreover, it features a cool KC Scott camo pattern. $55; huk.com

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME), COURTESY CONNELLY SKIS, COURTESY NEXT CHAPTER PUBLISHING, COURTESY SPERRY, COURTESY HUK, COURTESY SIMMS FISHING, COURTESY BAJIO

Gear/Apparel

UGO MESSENGER BAG

What's an item on every boater's wish list? A bag that can keep gear dry and secure on the water. If it floats, all the better! The ugo Messenger bag is fully waterproof to IP69 specifications, which means it is both dustproof and waterproof to 1-meter depths for at least a 30-minute duration. What sets the ugo Messenger apart from other bags is that it is designed to float, so if you drop it in the water, the precious cargo you are trying to protect won't sink like a stone to the depths. Made from 600D nylon TPU, the rugged bag withstands bumps and scrapes and the YKK zipper keeps a watertight seal when fully closed. With the included quick-release shoulder strap, it makes for a great briefcase too. $350; ugowear.com

OLUKAI ULELE WATER-READY BEACH SANDALS

Olukai sandals are one of the few brands of flip-flops that keep traction on a slippery deck, with a wet rubber grip sole designed for trekking through the water. Plus, they float, so if you accidentally drop one overboard, you can scoop it up with a fishing net. Olukai are known for its arch support, so they keep your feet comfortable all day while hanging out on the water. $90; olukai.com

Do-It-Yourself

WHALE AQUA SOURCE CLEAR FILTER

Give the boater on your gift list the taste of clean water for drinking and cooking aboard. The filter has a slim, compact design that installs easily in-line under floor boards and around bulkheads. Installation is simple using the supplied clips—it can also be mounted horizontally. This carbon-silver filter removes unpleasant tastes and odors, and the silver inhibits bacterial growth. The maximum pressure is 60 psi and it connects to ½-inch-diameter plumbing, which means it will work aboard the vast majority of boats' potable water systems. $61.99; freeportmarine.com

OPTIMA DIGITAL 1200+ 12V BATTERY CHARGER

Regardless of the boat they own, you can bet your mistletoe that the boater on your holiday gift list relies on batteries. More than ever, today's AGM and lithium marine batteries need to be conditioned and maintained as well as being charged. This Optima Digital 1200+ 12-volt battery charger does all those things. Just as great, it works for AGM, flooded-cell and lithium batteries, so you don't need to know what kind of batteries are installed aboard your giftee's boat. It delivers a maximum 15-amp charging output. Seasonally appropriate in color—just add a bow. $249.99; optimabatteries.com

RUX 30L WATERPROOF TOTE BAG

Pro-marine techs often carry a tool bag. Bags don't scratch and they stow aboard more easily than a toolbox. A boat-tool bag should be rugged, waterproof and stand open on its own. The RUX 30L tote bag fills the bill, making it a great gift. It features a roll top and durable fabric construction similar to that of a life raft. Two smaller pockets hold bits, fasteners, whatever, and the shoulder strap is detachable. We are testing it as you read this, so no full report is available yet. It comes in green, black and bronze, and is also available in 15L. $170 (30L); rux.life

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME). COURTESY UGO. COURTESY OLUKAI. COURTESY RUX. COURTESY OPTIMA BATTERIES. COURTESY WHALE

Do-It-Yourself

ANCOR MULTIMETER

Few tools get used—or prove as useful—aboard a boat than does a digital multimeter. With this Ancor 8-Function Handheld Digital Multimeter, the boater on your holiday gift list can troubleshoot electrical circuits, find shorts and broken wires or connections, measure resistance, voltage and more. It comes in a rugged rubber housing and works for both AC and DC electrical work. It conveniently fits in a holiday stocking. $46.22; hodgesmarine.com

BLUE SEAS CIRCUIT WIZARD APP

Watt's that? You get amped-up working on marine electrical systems? Don't blow a fuse! Give yourself the gift of Blue Seas Circuit Wizard. Available for Android and iPhone, this free app let's DIY boaters choose the correct size wire based on factors such as voltage, current and length of run. It works like the popular web version, but requires no internet connection, which is helpful in many boating situations. Did we mention that it's free? Download from the App Store or Google Play.

PETTIT ANCHORTECH ADHESIVE SEALANTS

Boating's editor-in-chief, Kevin Falvey, used these Pettit AnchorTech adhesive sealants aboard his own boat. The fast-dry formula works above and below the waterline and provides maximum adhesion. The UV-resistant formula is for above the waterline and does not yellow. The hybrid formula can be applied in all weather, and is paintable within 30 minutes of application. $10.62 to $19.99 for 4.5-ounce to 11.5-ounce sizes; defender.com

KBS COATINGS NUMETAL EPOXY PUTTY

NuMetal Epoxy Putty can be drilled, tapped, sanded, primed, and painted. It also works great for quick underwater repairs. Withstanding temperatures up to 300 degrees F, NuMetal is available in white, tan, black, and grey. Give your DIY boater the gift of a versatile, easy-to-use putty that can be used to effectively fill cracks, holes, and gouges to make repairs or plug leaks. $10 (3.5 ounces), $27 (1 pound); kbscoatings.com

SEIPEL MARINE CLEANERS WITH TOWELS

This four-pack from Seipel Marine provides complete boat-cleaning care. Included in one attractive box are four 32-ounce bottles color-coded to matching towels to avoid cross-contamination. It comes with vinyl and upholstery cleaner, EVA foam cleaner, UV interior protectant, and exterior quick detail. Give this one-stop maintenance shop for keeping boats of all types clean and protected. $99; seipelmarine.com

SEA-DOO LIFT KIT PWC/PONTOON

Granted, this lift kit from Sea-Doo won't tackle (see what we did there?) the largest pontoons, but to haul your PWC and small pontoons from the water to place them on a dock, trailer or the deck of your yacht, it just may be the bee's knees. Sea-Doo claims this lift kit is made to pull your Sea-Doo and watercraft off the water. Make sure to get the right equipment for the job to safely transport your vehicle. Santa has his elves; watercraft owners need a lift. The kit easily stows when not in use. $979.49; sea-doo-shop.brp.com/

SALT ATTACK ENGINE FLUSH BAGS

Salt Attack's Engine Flush Bags come from New Zealand, but that's no problem for a fat guy with a sleigh! The collapsible design makes it easy to stow, yet when filled with water, it allows flushing an outboard or sterndrive without fear of reduced waterflow that "muffs" can bring. Plus, it can double as a portable livewell. It comes in four sizes. $75 to $135; salt-attack.nz/product/salt-attack-engine-flush-bag

PHOTOS: NATALYON (ROPE PATTERN), MELAZERG (NAUTICAL PATTERN), AI-GENERATED BY ADOBE FIREFLY (BACKGROUND FRAME), COURTESY ANCOR, COURTESY BLUE SEAS SYSTEMS, COURTESY PETTIT PAINT, COURTESY SEA-DOO, COURTESY SALT ATTACK, COURTESY SEIPEL MARINE, COURTESY KBS COATINGS

THE DIRTY DOZEN

Twelve things to look out for when buying a used boat.

By Capt. John N. Raguso

I have bought a half-dozen coastal fishing craft in the past, and all were preowned. I gravitate toward "experienced" vessels for a few compelling reasons. As my needs drifted toward running larger and more-seaworthy craft, the new-boat price tag was becoming less realistic for my budget. Another inducement to consider purchasing a late-model used boat was the usual depreciation hit that a new boat takes in its initial three to five years. These craft are still in great condition, with the remnants of a transferrable factory warranty. But not all preowned vessels are created equal, and I have learned a few things during my many used-boat-buying escapades. I'll share a dozen nasty nits with you here, along with potential solutions.

ROD HOLDERS THAT DRAIN INTO THE BILGE

Flush-mounted gunwale rod holders that drain water directly into the bilge cause a number of issues, including added stress on bilge pumps and allowing any foam flotation downstream to absorb water. Other negatives include exposing your wiring and batteries stowed in the bilge area to unwanted immersion, which accelerates corrosion on any connections or inline breakers. Adding an accessory cap that closes off the rod-holder opening on top and/or installing a drain cup and hose to the bottom end of the rod-holder tube solves the problem. The parts required for a quick and easy DIY fix are reasonably priced and are available on Amazon, eBay, and at a variety of online marine-accessory dealers.

EYE THE ROD HOLDERS
When shopping for a boat, note whether the rod holders drain to the bilge. If so, either caps or a drain hose should be fitted to them.

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) HAIHAN ZHANG / ADOBE STOCK, SCANDAMERICAN / ADOBE STOCK, ZACH STOVALL

CHECK THE CANVAS

Often, a formerly owned boat—be it a cuddy, dual-console or center-console—comes equipped with a canvas package. Even if the dealer or previous owner claims that it is "like new," make the effort to unfurl the canvas from its shroud and ensure that the snaps are all lubed and intact, along with the ability to see through the clear vinyl windows when standing or sitting at the helm. Hazy, clear vinyl or crusty canvas that is weathered, leaking and/or worn from use or age is expensive to replace and might add $2,000 or more to the purchase price.

BEWARE OF BELOW-DECK LIVEWELLS

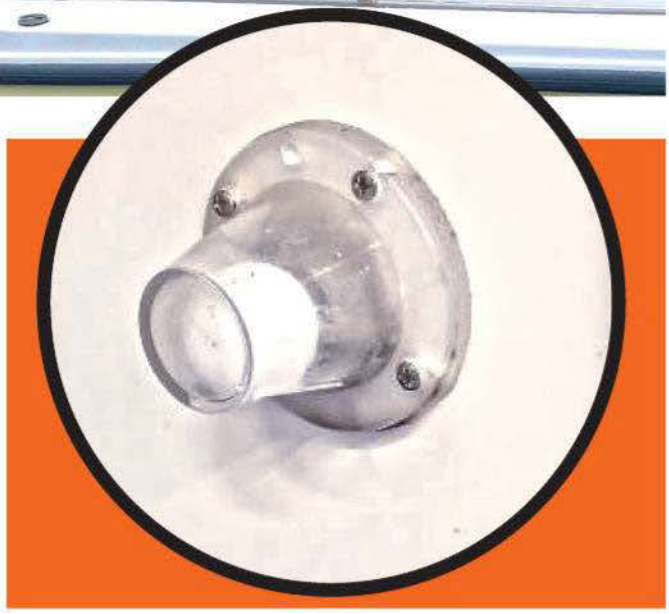
Livewells positioned below the deck and accessed via a flush hatch in the cockpit sole are a real pain to your knees when trying to catch a frisky baitfish in a rolling seaway. They're also a challenge when trying to fix plumbing leaks or swapping out a pump motor. Yet another negative is the need for a second pump to drain out the below-deck well's contents, which is more stuff to maintain in the limited-access bilge space. The best livewells are those that are positioned either in the transom corners or the transom cap, which are more ergonomic when rigging a live bait, typically empty water overboard via a gravity drain, and are less of a challenge to access and maintain.

WET FEET IN THE COCKPIT

While wet feet might be the norm when a brace of hefty crewmembers are tuna-chunking in the cockpit 30 miles offshore in choppy seas, dry feet should be the standard when working calmer waters. One way to check this out is to turn on the freshwater hose and douse the deck with some weight in the cockpit when the boat is in the water to see if the scuppers will keep it dry. Another method is to toss a few pails of bay water onto the deck to see how fast it clears out. If persistent cockpit water is a nagging issue, adding pingpong-ball scupper drain fittings might solve the problem—though these require vigilant maintenance to prevent them from becoming fouled. These are available in marine stores and online.

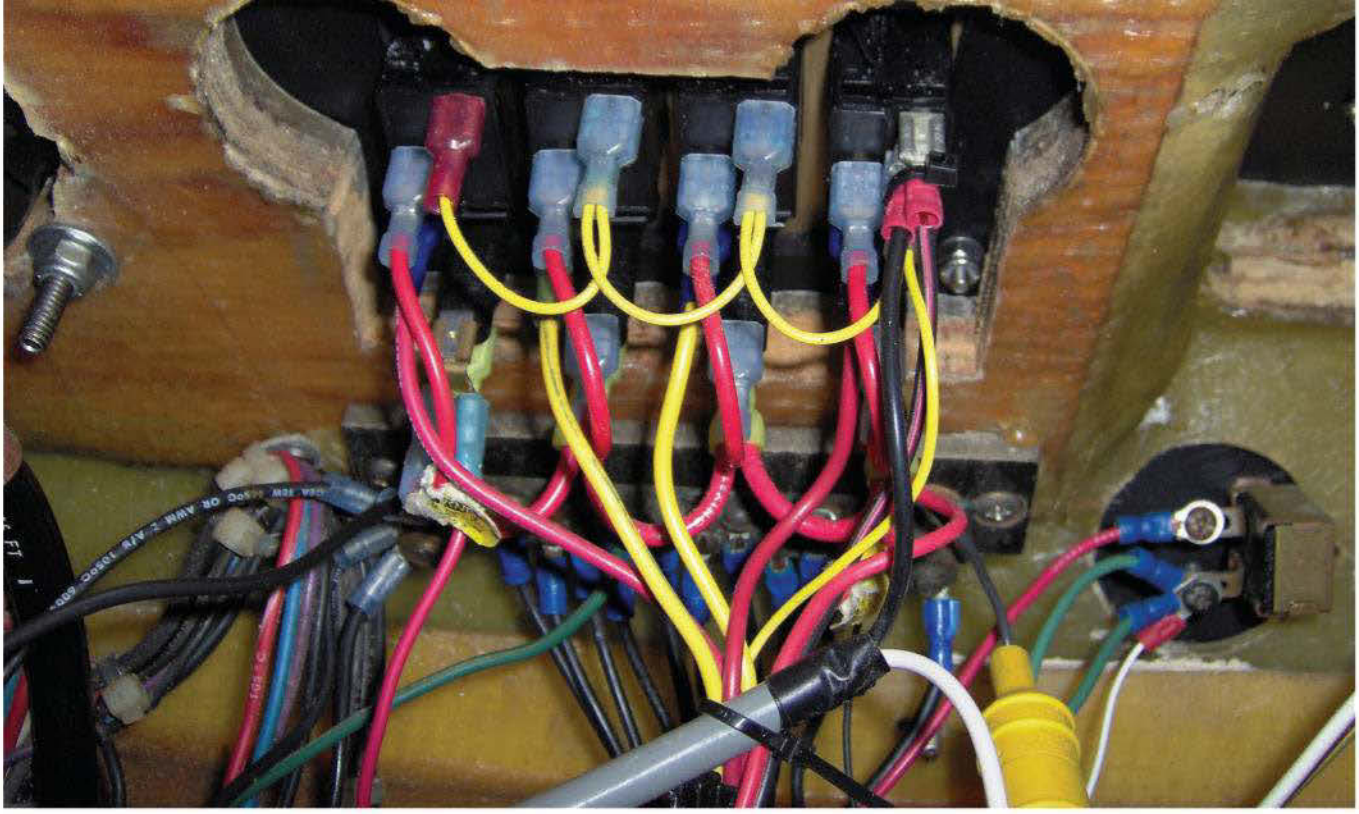
PANEL-WIRING JAMBALAYA

The panel wiring on some of the used boats that I have inspected in the past have resembled an overturned plate of rainbow spaghetti.



SCUPPERS Self-bailing-model boats allow the cockpit to drain while at rest, in the water, and with no load. Some boats will sink enough to allow water to backflow through the scuppers when people are positioned aft, as for fishing. If that's the case, scupper valves or flaps might be needed. Check for this.

PHOTOS: CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO (3)



NEAT AND ACCESSIBLE The author, a licensed captain who has bought, sold and owned many boats, considers neat and accessible electrical and plumbing systems a benchmark when considering the purchase of a used boat. "Spaghetti" wiring or inaccessible fixtures are unacceptable.

This is especially true if the former owners didn't follow any particular electrical code and added numerous accessories with whatever wiring was available. Both factory and added accessory wiring should be neat, loomed or tie-wrapped, feature heat-shrink tubing on the connection ends, and be tagged to identify what switch or piece of electronics they represent. Most quality builders color-code their 12-volt DC wiring harnesses and feature a legend in their operator's manual to describe the function and location for each individual hot wire (white with a red stripe, blue with a white stripe, etc.). I recommend using tinned, marine-grade wire that is the proper gauge for the amperage demand.

BATTERY-SWITCH MAYHEM

Battery-switch wiring can be a source of confusion on a boat. Often, the 12-volt DC e-panels and the engine are running off the single-output feeder on the typical four-way switch. This is not ideal because starting your engine can cause a demand spike that shuts off your electronics. I recommend a pair of batteries (one cranking and one for electronics) for a single-engine boat. To be fully "in charge" of the battery-charging operation, employ a pair of switches for this duty, with the house power cell on a separate on/off switch and the engine battery on the Battery 1 position of a four-way switch. Connect the input of the on/off switch to the Battery 2 lug, and you can now manually control when everything is on and off. Use the "both" setting on the battery switch for charging both batteries via the engine alternator.

SEACOCKS

Through-hull fittings with seacocks allow the operator to throw a 90-degree lever arm to stop unwanted water flow should a leak or break develop in downstream plumbing. The problem is that

WHICH SWITCH Boats with at least a pair of batteries are preferred by the author for redundancy in engine starting. Safety tip: Positive battery terminals must be covered per the American Boat & Yacht Council. These are not.

PHOTOS: CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO (2)

some seacocks are positioned in the hull on the extreme end of human reach. Quality builders feature remote seacock fittings with extension arms that allow crew to open and close the lever. But what if these are frozen? It's a good idea to work these manual levers at least once a month to ensure smooth operation. For stuck lever arms, remove the hose connection (on dry land) and spray penetrating oil such as WD-40 or CRC into the nipple and gradually try to work it free. If this doesn't work, the faulty seacock needs replacement. At any rate, make sure the seacocks operate smoothly on a boat you're considering buying. Replacing or rebuilding a corroded seacock might cost a few hundred dollars and take several hours.

SAFETY FIRST By law, safety gear must be carried aboard boats. When boat shopping, consider how and where this USCG-required equipment will be stowed aboard.

TAKE IT TO THE HOUSE

Far too many times, even on name-brand boats costing $300,000 or more, someone will forget to dedicate a "house" battery for the vessel's electronics. My simple rule of thumb: one deep-cycle battery for the onboard electrical panels and one starting battery for the engine. If you are running twin engines on the transom, that translates to a pair of starting batteries and one house battery. Triple engines add up to a trio of starting batteries and one for the house, etc. If onboard-electronics demands require a pair of house batteries, make it so.

SAFETY-GEAR STORAGE

Safety-gear storage space (for items such as life jackets, flares, tools, lights, rations, etc.) is frequently an afterthought on many boats. If you can't put this stuff anywhere that's easy to access in a sudden, unplanned emergency, things could turn catastrophic very quickly. One solution for life jackets is to install a cargo net holder under the T-top or hardtop that puts these lifesavers in the right place for the right moment. If the used boat you bought is too small to stow the aforementioned emergency gear, packing

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY ACR ELECTRONICS; CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO

CHECK ALL OF IT It might appear obvious, but it behooves boat buyers to flip every switch and push every button in an effort to make sure that each and every function aboard the boat is operational. The helm switches, along with controls and screens, should all be installed so as to be readily visible.

HIGHER AND HIGHER: Fuel filters, such as the one to the left, must be easily accessible in the event that a clogged element needs changing at sea. Stainless filter brackets can prevent corrosion and imply careful prior ownership. Batteries, as shown above, should be installed dry and high above the bilge.

up a waterproof ditch bag is the solution, requiring that you take it on and off the boat every trip.

FUEL-FILTER WHEREABOUTS

Although it's common sense that every engine on board should have its own dedicated fuel filter/water separator, some older used boats might lack these. Canister-style water-separating fuel filters should be installed in spots that are easy to reach, where there's enough elbow room to swap out the canisters without spilling the contents down into the bilge. The lower in the bilge they are located, the faster the steel cartridge and aluminum mount will deteriorate. I try to install these as high and dry as possible, and employ a stainless-steel filter head to minimize corrosion concerns.

ONBOARD COOLERS AND FISH BOXES

One of my pet peeves when looking at a preowned vessel is to observe bait boxes, iceboxes, fish boxes and/or storage boxes that drain their contents down into the bilge. Nothing good can come from this, and the icy, slimy gruel that collects down under will cause the cabin areas and console interior to smell like a rotting chum bucket, in addition to making your bilge pumps work extra hard. This approach shows a lack of design creativity, as well as cost-cutting on the part of the builder. Potential solutions include running hoses from the box drains to a macerator, but only if there's space and access in the bilge to make this happen.

BATTERIES IN THE BILGE

I mount my boat's starting and house batteries in an easily accessible high-and-dry spot because they are critical to smooth boat operations. If the batteries have a hiccup, the boat stops running—wherever that might be. The best spots to install power cells to ensure longevity and protection from the elements are typically under the center console or helm or in the cabin. The least-desirable spot is down low in the bilge area; the presence of water in the boat's bowels will expose the lugs and connections to a constant, highly corrosive bath. If this is the only place they can go, use battery boxes, and button them up as tightly as possible.

APPEARANCE MATTERS Sure, a used boat need not win a beauty prize to be a "good boat." A vessel, such as this one, featuring clean, polished surfaces and fixtures serves as a buyer indicator of quality.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP LEFT) CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO (2); KEVIN FALVEY, CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO

By Jim Hendricks

FLIR OCEAN SCOUT PRO

FLIR has been a pioneer in marine thermal-imaging devices, including handheld scopes/cameras, that can detect the heat signatures of objects such as buoys, boats, breakwaters and other hazards to enhance boating safety at night. Now FLIR has launched the next generation of handheld thermal cameras for boaters—the Ocean Scout Pro.

Designed for the specific needs of mariners, as well as law enforcement, the Ocean Scout Pro monocular proves more intuitive to use than previous models, and its price point makes it accessible to a wide range of boaters. I had the opportunity to test one of the first available models and found the 32-degree field of view felt natural, closely aligning with my unaided vision. In addition, the images were easily decipherable, something I can't claim about earlier scopes.

With an extended 500-meter detection range, the scope allowed me to continuously and completely focus on observed target scenes without the obstruction and confusion of on-screen menus and settings. Measuring just 7 inches in length and weighing 18.4 ounces, the Ocean Scout Pro is easy to handle to scan the waters at night. It also comes with two eye cups for optimal fit to block light intrusion from ambient onboard illumination. A diopter adjustment at the eyepiece lets you focus the images to match your vision level.

I applaud the one-finger button control, which made it simple to adjust features such as image mode, zoom, brightness and standby. The Ocean Scout Pro can also connect wirelessly to an iPhone or iPad using the Scout Pro app to stream video to your mobile device or view and manage the camera's files. It has four video palette modes including White Hot to display warmer objects in white and cooler objects in black; Grayscale depicts images in a wide temperature span for realistic details; Black Hot is an inverted version of White Hot; and Sepia applies a warm, golden hue to the White Hot palette for reduced eye fatigue.

The Ocean Scout Pro is IP67 waterproof-rated and is engineered to withstand a 2-meter drop. The battery provides six hours of use on a single charge and includes USB Type-C charging and a data-transfer cord. $2,395; thegpsstore.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY RON BALLANTI, COURTESY FLIR, COURTESY GARMIN

GARMIN FORCE CURRENT KAYAK MOTOR

Garmin's new Force Current electric kayak motor offers a hands-free wireless throttle and steering control system. Engineered to fit a variety of kayak models, it features a brushless motor with full forward and reverse thrust that makes it easy to navigate in any direction, weave through sunken timber, carve a tight circle, sneak along shorelines or creep through weed beds.

To control a kayak, Force Current uses power-steer wireless foot pedals, included on select bundles, or a wireless handheld remote with point-and-go gesture steering. The foot pedals also allow you to engage anchor lock and heading hold, both of which use multiband GPS for position data.

What's more, wireless networking with a Garmin chart plotter allows anglers to create routes and tracks for Force Current to follow, and the chart plotter can also be used to control steering, throttle, anchor lock and more. You can also use a Garmin smartwatch to control throttle and steering.

The dual-voltage brushless motor delivers 50 pounds of thrust with 24 volts of DC power, or 30 pounds at 12 volts DC. With safety in mind, the included wireless man-overboard tag will cut off the motor should the operator fall overboard. In shallow areas, a kayaker can quickly and easily stow or deploy the prop with one hand with the included stow rope and cleat kit. The motor weighs less than 25 pounds.

Force Current is engineered for both fresh and salt water with advanced corrosion protection. Two prop options are included—a high-efficiency prop for maximizing battery life and a weedless prop designed to cut through aquatic vegetation. $3,599.99 for the motor with foot pedals, $2,999.99 for the motor without pedals; garmin.com/marine

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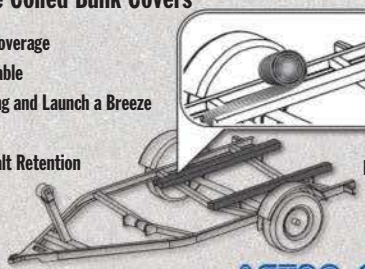

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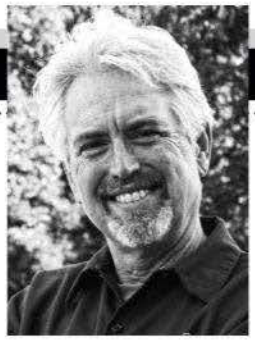
By Charles Plueddeman



WHAT'S IN A NAME II

Naming a boat is harder than naming a child.

For more than three years I've been tempting fate on the water. It's not that I'm making bad choices. I'm wearing my life jacket. I'm a sober captain. I leave a float plan. But I'm suffering from severe indecision, specifically about naming my boat. And by not naming my boat, according to tradition and legend, I risk incurring the wrath of Neptune. I convinced myself that Neptune was certainly too busy ruling over the Seven Seas to bother with a small lake in the North Woods. But then I did my research, and in the Roman religion, Neptune is the god of the sea and of fresh water. So there you go—Neptune lurks at every launch ramp, checking to see if you've cleaned the milfoil off your trailer.

Faithful readers will recall the time the Lake View Inn gang pestered my good friend Chuck Larson into conducting an elaborate ceremony to rename his new Alumacraft, which involved positioning the boat with the bow facing due north at sunset, reciting a carefully crafted invocation to Neptune—or Njord in this case—and offering a tribute of Hamm's beer, "From the Land of Sky Blue Waters …". Chuck, of course, took this seriously and now he's been bugging me about naming my vintage Dunphy, a 14-foot mahogany plywood runabout.

Just last Friday night Chuck cornered me in a back booth at the Lake View Inn, where I was watching the grandchildren open their pull tabs.

Cultural Interpretation: After our fish fry dinner I buy each grandchild $5 worth of pull tabs. This started as a distraction until one of them won $250, which their father promptly confiscated for the "college fund." And, yes, pre-school children do gamble in Northwoods' taverns so please mind your own business.

Anyway…Chuck slides into the booth and shares his thoughts.

"I know the lake is frozen but you've got to come up with a name for the Dunphy before next season," Chuck said, "especially if you're taking these beautiful little children out on the water. How could you ever forgive yourself if Neptune decides to cast calamity down from the heavens? Maybe he sends a surf wake to swamp your little boat!"

I have been trying to come up with a name. There's some tradition that you name a boat after a wife—but which one?—or a daughter, but I have five of those. Some owners like puns such as *Seas the Day* but does that work on a vintage boat? There are names that allude to a profession, so I could go with *Writer's Block* but that's so corny. I asked my wife for an idea and she suggested *Bob*, which was no help at all. She is only interested in staging the boat with mid-century accessories.

> Neptune lurks at every launch ramp, checking to see if you've cleaned the milfoil off your trailer.

I have got two ideas I think are pretty good. The first is *Dasher* because for its vintage, this Dunphy has a rather rakish profile, a descending sheer and low freeboard aft. It's a dashing boat! The second is *Analog*, because there is nothing digital about this boat. It doesn't even have a key. To shut down the Evinrude outboard I push the choke button on the dash. I could get a little fancy and go with *Analogue* but that's a bit pretentious. Save that for the Gar Wood find in a barn.

So, will it be *Dasher* or *Analog*? I asked the grandchildren, and the little 4-year-old looked up from his pull tabs and said, "Grandpa, just name it *Bob*." Neptune weeps.

ILLUSTRATION: TIM BOWER; PHOTO: MABEL PLUEDDEMAN

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